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COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO
BY ALEXANDRE DUMAS
VOL. II.

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A TALE WHICH HOLDETH CHILDREN FROM PLAY & OLD MEN FROM THE CHIMNEY CORNER

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY

The COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO · by ALEXANDRE DUMAS · VOL: 2

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THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO

CHAPTER LIV

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE STOCKS

SOME days after this meeting, Albert de Morcerf visited the Count of Monte Cristo at his house in the Champs Elysées, which had already assumed that palace-like appearance which the count's princely fortune enabled him to give even to his most temporary residences. He came to renew the thanks of Madame Danglars which had been already conveyed to the count through the medium of a letter, signed " Baronne Danglars, née Hermine de Servieux." Albert was accompanied by Lucien Debray, who, joining in his friend's conversation, added some passing compliments, the source of which the count's talent for finesse easily enabled him to guess. He was convinced that Lucien's visit to him was to be attributed to a double feeling of curiosity, the larger half of which sentiment emanated from the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin. In short, Madame Danglars, not being able personally to examine in detail the domestic economy and household arrangements of a man who gave away horses worth thirty thousand livres, and who went to the opera with a Greek slave wearing diamonds to the amount of a million of money, had deputed those eyes, by which she was accustomed to see, to give her a faithful account of the mode of life of this incomprehensible individual. But the count did not appear to suspect there could be the slightest connection between Lucien's visit and the baroness's curiosity.

" You are in constant communication, then, with the Baron Danglars?" inquired the count of Albert de Morcerf.

" Yes, count, you know what I told you."

" All remains the same, then, in that quarter?"

" It is more than ever a settled thing," said Lucien; and considering this remark was all that he was at that time called upon to make, he adjusted the glass to his eye, and biting the

top of his gold-headed cane, began to make the tour of the room, examining the arms and the pictures.

"Ah!" said Monte Cristo, "I did not expect, after hearing what you said, that the affair would be so promptly concluded."

"Oh, things take their course without our assistance. While we are forgetting them, they are falling into their appointed order; and when again our attention is directed to them, we are surprised at the progress they have made towards the proposed end. My father and M. Danglars served together in Spain,—my father in the army, and M. Danglars in the commissariat department. It was there that my father, ruined by the revolution, and M. Danglars, who never had possessed any patrimony, both laid the foundations of their different fortunes."

"Yes," said Monte Cristo, "I think M. Danglars mentioned that in a visit which I paid him; and," continued he, casting a side-glance at Lucien, who was turning over the leaves of an album, "is Mademoiselle Eugénie pretty,—for I think I remember that to be her name?"

"Very pretty, or rather, very beautiful," replied Albert; "but of that style of beauty which I do not appreciate. I am an ungrateful fellow."

"You speak as if you were already her husband."

"Ah!" returned Albert, in his turn looking round to see what Lucien was doing.

"Really," said Monte Cristo, lowering his voice, "you do not appear to me to be very enthusiastic on the subject of this marriage."

"Mademoiselle Danglars is too rich for me," replied Morcerf; "and that frightens me."

"Bah!" exclaimed Monte Cristo, "that's a fine reason to give! Are you not rich yourself?"

"My father's income is about fifty thousand livres per annum; and he will give me perhaps ten or twelve thousand when I marry."

"That perhaps might not be considered a large sum, in Paris especially," said the count; "but everything does not depend on wealth, and it is a fine thing to have a good name, and to occupy a high station in society. Your name is celebrated, your position magnificent; and then the Comte de Morcerf is a soldier, and it is pleasing to see the integrity of a Bayard united to the poverty of a Duguesclin,—disinterestedness is the brightest ray in which a noble sword can shine. As for me, I consider the union with Mademoiselle Danglars a most suitable one; she will enrich you, and you will ennoble her."

Albert shook his head, and looked thoughtful. "There is still something else," said he.

"I confess," observed Monte Cristo, "that I have some difficulty in comprehending your objection to a young lady who is both rich and beautiful."

"Oh!" said Morcerf, "this repugnance, if repugnance it may be called, is not all on my side."

"Whence can it arise, then? for you told me your father desired the marriage."

"My mother's is the dissenting voice; she has a clear and penetrating judgment, and does not smile on the proposed union. I cannot account for it, but she seems to entertain some prejudice against the Danglars."

"Ah!" said the count, in a somewhat forced tone, "that may be easily explained; Madame la Comtesse de Morcerf, who is aristocracy and refinement itself, does not relish the idea of being allied by your marriage with one of ignoble birth,—that is natural enough."

"I do not know if that is her reason," said Albert; "but one thing I do know, that if this marriage be consummated it will render her quite miserable. There was to have been a meeting six weeks ago in order to talk over and settle the affair; but I had such a sudden attack of indisposition—"

"Real?" interrupted the count, smiling.

"Oh, real enough, from anxiety doubtless,—that they postponed the rendezvous for two months. There is no hurry, you know. I am not yet twenty-one, and Eugénie is only seventeen years of age; but the two months expire next week. It must be done. My dear count, you cannot imagine how my mind is harassed. Ah! how happy you are in being free!"

"Well! and why should not you be free too? What prevents you from being so?"

"Oh! it will be too great a disappointment to my father if I do not marry Mademoiselle Danglars."

"Marry her, then," said the count, with a significant shrug of the shoulders.

"Yes," replied Morcerf; "but that will plunge my mother into positive grief."

"Then do not marry her," said the count.

"Well, I shall see. I will try and think over what is the best thing to be done; you will give me your advice, will you not, and if possible extricate me from my unpleasant position? I think, rather than give pain to my excellent mother, I would run the risk of offending the count."

Monte Cristo turned away; he seemed moved by this last remark. "Ah!" said he to Debray, who had thrown himself into an easy-chair at the farthest extremity of the salon, and who held a pencil in his right hand and an account-book in his left, "what are you doing there? Are you making a sketch after Poussin?"

"No, no! I am doing something of a very opposite nature to painting. I am engaged with arithmetic."

"Arithmetic!"

"Yes; I am calculating—by the way, Morcerf, that indirectly concerns you—I am calculating what the house of Danglars must have gained by the last rise in Hayti stock; from 206 they have risen to 409 in three days, and the prudent banker had purchased largely at 206. He must have made three hundred thousand livres."

"That is not his best stroke," said Morcerf; "did he not gain a million in Spanish securities this last year?"

"My dear fellow," said Lucien, "here is the Count of Monte Cristo, who will say to you, as the Italians do,—

'Danáro e santità,
Metà della metà.'

When they tell me such things, I only shrug my shoulders and say nothing."

"But you were speaking of Hayti?" said Monte Cristo.

"Ah, Hayti!—that is quite another thing! Hayti is the *écarté* of French stock-jobbing. They may like *la bouillotte*, delight in whist, be enraptured with *le boston*, and yet grow tired of all; but they always come back to *écarté*,—that is the game *par excellence*. M. Danglars sold yesterday at 406, and pockets three hundred thousand livres. Had he but waited till to-day the stocks would have fallen to 205, and instead of gaining three hundred thousand livres he would have lost twenty or twenty-five thousand."

"And why is this sudden fall from 409 to 205?" asked Monte Cristo. "I beg pardon, but I am profoundly ignorant of all these stock-jobbing intrigues."

"Because," said Albert, laughing, "one piece of news follows another, and there is often great dissimilarity between them."

"Ah," said the count, "I see that M. Danglars is accustomed to play at gaining or losing three hundred thousand livres in a day; he must be enormously rich."

"It is not he who plays," exclaimed Lucien, "it is Madame Danglars; she is indeed daring."

"But you who are a reasonable being, Lucien, and who know

how little dependence is to be placed on the news, since you are at the fountain-head, surely you ought to prevent it," said Morcerf, with a smile.

"How can I if her husband fails in controlling her?" asked Lucien; "you know the character of the baroness,—no one has any influence with her, and she does precisely what she pleases."

"Ah, if I were in your place—" said Albert.

"Well?"

"I would reform her; it would be rendering a service to her future son-in-law."

"How would you set about it?"

"Ah, that would be easy enough,—I would give her a lesson."

"A lesson?"

"Yes. Your position as secretary to the minister renders your authority great on the subject of political news; you never open your mouth but the stock-brokers immediately stenograph your words. Cause her to lose one hundred thousand livres suddenly, and that will teach her prudence."

"I do not understand," stammered Lucien.

"It is very clear, notwithstanding," replied the young man, with a *naïveté* totally free from all affectation; "announce to her some fine morning an unheard-of piece of intelligence,—some telegraphic despatch, of which you alone are in possession; for instance, that Henry IV. was seen yesterday at the house of Gabrielle. That will cause the funds to rise; she will lay her plans accordingly, and she will certainly lose when Beauchamp announces the following day in his journal, 'The report which has been circulated, stating the king to have been seen yesterday at Gabrielle's house, is totally without foundation. We can positively assert that his Majesty did not quit the Pont Neuf.'"

Lucien half smiled. Monte Cristo, although apparently indifferent, had not lost one word of this conversation, and his penetrating eye had even read a hidden secret in the embarrassed manner of the secretary. This embarrassment had completely escaped Albert, but it caused Lucien to shorten his visit; he was evidently ill at ease. The count, in taking leave of him, said something in a low voice to which he answered, "Willingly, Monsieur the Count; I accept your proposal." The count returned to young Morcerf.

"Do you not think, on reflection," said he to him, "that you have done wrong in thus speaking of your mother-in-law in the presence of M. Debray?"

"Monsieur the Count," said Morcerf, "I beg of you not to apply that title so prematurely."

"Now, speaking without any exaggeration, is your mother really so very much averse to this marriage?"

"So much so that the baroness very rarely comes to the house; and my mother has not, I think, visited Madame Danglars twice in her whole life."

"Then," said the count, "I am emboldened to speak openly to you. M. Danglars is my banker; M. de Villefort has overwhelmed me with politeness in return for a service which a casual piece of good fortune enabled me to render him. I predict from all this an avalanche of dinners and routs. Now, in order to appear not to expect such a proceeding, and also to be beforehand with them, if you like it, I have thought of inviting Monsieur and Madame Danglars, and Monsieur and Madame de Villefort, to my country-house at Auteuil. If I were to invite you and the Comte and Comtesse de Morcerf to this dinner, it would give it the air of a matrimonial rendezvous, or at least Madame de Morcerf would look upon the affair in that light, especially if M. le Baron Danglars did me the honour to bring his daughter. In that case your mother would hold me in aversion, and I do not at all wish that; on the contrary,—and tell it to her as often as there is opportunity,—I desire to occupy a prominent place in her esteem."

"Indeed, count," said Morcerf, "I thank you sincerely for having used so much candour towards me, and I gratefully accept the exclusion which you propose to me. You say you desire my mother's good opinion; I assure you it is already yours to a very unusual degree."

"Do you think so?" inquired Monte Cristo, with interest.

"Oh, I am sure of it; we talked of you an hour after you left us the other day. But to return to what we were saying. If my mother could know of this consideration on your part—and I will venture to tell her—I am sure that she will be most grateful to you; it is true that my father will be equally angry."

The count laughed. "Well," said he to Morcerf, "but I think your father will not be the only angry one; Monsieur and Madame Danglars will think me a very ill-mannered person. They know that I am intimate with you,—that you are, in fact, one of the oldest of my Parisian acquaintances, and they will not find you at my house; they will certainly ask me why I did not invite you. Be sure to provide yourself with some previous engagement which shall have a semblance of probability, and communicate the fact to me by a line in writing. You know that with bankers nothing but a written document will be valid."

"I will do better than that," said Albert; "my mother is wishing to go to the seaside,—what day is fixed for your dinner?"

"Saturday."

"This is Tuesday,—well, to-morrow evening we leave, and the day after we shall be at Tréport. Really, Monsieur the Count, you are a charming person to set people at their ease."

"Indeed, you give me more credit than I deserve; I only wish to do what will be agreeable to you, that is all."

"When shall you send your invitations?"

"This very day."

"Well, I will immediately call on M. Danglars, and tell him that my mother and myself leave Paris to-morrow. I have not seen you, consequently I know nothing of your dinner."

"How foolish you are! Have you forgotten that M. Debray has just seen you at my house?"

"Ah, true!"

"On the contrary, I have seen you, and invited you without any ceremony, when you instantly answered that it would be impossible for you to be among the number of my guests, as you were going to Tréport."

"Well, then, that is settled; but you will come and call on my mother before to-morrow?"

"Before to-morrow? That will be a difficult matter to arrange; besides, I should be in the way of all the preparations for departure."

"Very well! do something better than that. You were only a charming man before, but if you accede to my proposal, you will be adorable."

"What must I do to attain such a height?"

"You are to-day free as air; come and dine with me. We shall be a small party,—only yourself, my mother, and I. You have scarcely seen my mother; you will have an opportunity of observing her more closely. She is a remarkable woman, and I only regret that there does not exist another who resembles her, about twenty years younger; in that case, I assure you, there would very soon be a Comtesse and Vicomtesse de Morcerf. As to my father, you will not see him; he is officially engaged, and dines with Monsieur the Grand Referendary. We will talk over our travels; and you, who have seen the whole world, will relate your adventures. You shall tell us the history of the beautiful Greek who was with you the other night at the opera, and whom you call your slave, and yet treat like a princess. We will talk Italian and Spanish. Come, accept my invitation, and my mother will thank you."

"A thousand thanks," said the count; "your invitation is most gracious, and I regret exceedingly that it is not in my power to accept it. I am not so much at liberty as you suppose; on the contrary, I have a most important engagement."

"Ah, take care! you were teaching me just now how in case of an invitation to dinner one might creditably make an excuse. I require the proof of a pre-engagement. I am not a banker, like M. Danglars, but I am quite as incredulous as he is."

"I am going to give you a proof," replied the count; and he rang the bell.

"Humph!" said Morcerf, "this is the second time you have refused to dine with my mother; it is evident you wish to avoid her."

Monte Cristo started. "Oh, you do not mean that!" said he; "besides, here comes the confirmation of my assertion." Baptistin entered and remained standing at the door. "I had no previous knowledge of your visit, had I?"

"Indeed, you are such an extraordinary person that I would not answer for it."

"At all events, I could not guess that you would invite me to dinner?"

"Probably not."

"Well, listen; Baptistin, what did I tell you this morning when I called you into my laboratory?"

"To close the door against visitors as soon as the clock struck five," replied the valet.

"What then?"

"Ah, Monsieur the Count—" said Albert.

"No, no, I wish to do away with that mysterious reputation that you have given me, my dear viscount; it is tiresome to be always acting Manfred. I wish my life to be free and open. Go on, Baptistin."

"Then to admit no one except M. le Major Bartolomeo Cavalcanti and his son."

"You hear: Major Bartolomeo Cavalcanti,—a man who ranks among the most ancient nobility of Italy, whose name Dante has celebrated in the tenth canto of *The Inferno*; you remember it, do you not? Then there is his son, a charming young man about your own age, viscount, bearing the same title as yourself, and who is making his *entrée* into the Parisian world, aided by his father's millions. The major will bring his son with him this evening, the *contino*, as we say in Italy; he confides him to my care. If he prove himself worthy of it, I

will do what I can to advance his interests; you will assist me, will you not?"

"Most undoubtedly! This Major Cavalcanti is an old friend of yours, then?"

"By no means. He is a worthy nobleman, very polite, modest, and agreeable, such as may be found constantly in Italy, descendants of very ancient families. I have met him several times at Florence, Bologna, and Lucca, and he has now communicated to me the fact of his arrival in this place. The acquaintances one makes in travelling have a sort of claim on one. They everywhere expect to receive the same attention which you once paid them by chance; as though the civilities of a passing hour were likely to awaken any lasting interest in favour of the man in whose society you may happen to be thrown in the course of your journey. This good Major Cavalcanti has come to take a second view of Paris, which he has seen only in passing through in the time of the empire, when he was on his way to Moscow. I shall give him a good dinner; he will confide his son to my care; I will promise to watch over him. I shall let him follow in whatever path his folly may lead him; and then I shall have done my part."

"Certainly; I see you are a precious mentor," said Albert. "Good-by, then; we shall return on Sunday. By the way, I have received news of Franz."

"Have you? Is he still amusing himself in Italy?"

"I believe so; however, he regrets your absence extremely. He says you were the sun of Rome, and that without you all appears dark and cloudy; I do not know if he does not even go so far as to say that it rains."

"His opinion of me is altered for the better, then?"

"No, he still persists in looking upon you as the most incomprehensible and mysterious of beings."

"He is a charming young man," said Monte Cristo; "and I felt a lively interest in him the very first evening when I learned that he was in search of a supper, and prevailed upon him to accept a portion of mine. He is, I think, the son of General d'Epinay?"

"He is."

"The same who was so shamefully assassinated in 1815?"

"By the Bonapartists."

"Yes! really I like him extremely; is there not also a matrimonial engagement contemplated for him?"

"Yes, he is to marry Mademoiselle de Villefort."

"Indeed!"

"Just as I am to marry Mademoiselle Danglars," said Albert, laughing.

"You smile!"

"Yes."

"Why do you do so?"

"I smile because there appears to me to be about as much inclination for the consummation of the engagement in question as there is for my own. But really, my dear count, we are talking of women as they talk of men; it is unpardonable!" Albert rose.

"Are you going?"

"Really, that is very good in you! Two hours have I been boring you to death with my company, and then you with the greatest politeness, ask me if I am going! Indeed, count, you are the most polished man in the world! And your servants, too, how very well behaved they are. There is quite a style about them,—M. Baptistin especially; I could never get such a man as that. My servants seem to imitate those you sometimes see in a play, who because they have only a word or two to say acquit themselves in the most awkward manner possible. So if you part with M. Baptistin, give me the refusal of him."

"Agreed, viscount."

"That is not all. Give my compliments to your illustrious visitor, Cavalcante of the Cavalcanti; and if by any chance he should be wishing to establish his son, find him a wife very rich, very noble, on her mother's side at least, and a baroness in right of her father, in that I will help you."

"Oh, oh! you will do as much as that, will you?"

"Yes."

"Well, really, nothing is certain in this world."

"Oh, count, what a service you might render me! I should like you a hundred times better if by your intervention I could manage to remain a bachelor, even were it only for ten years."

"Nothing is impossible," gravely replied Monte Cristo; and taking leave of Albert, he returned into the house and struck the gong three times. Bertuccio appeared.

"M. Bertuccio, you understand that I intend entertaining company on Saturday at Auteuil." Bertuccio slightly started. "I shall require your services to see that all be properly arranged. It is a beautiful house, or at all events may be made so."

"There must be a good deal done before it can deserve that title, Monsieur the Count, for the tapestried hangings are very old."

"Let them all be taken away and changed, then, with the

exception of the sleeping-chamber which is hung with red damask; you will leave that exactly as it is." Bertuccio bowed. "You will not touch the garden either. As to the yard, you may do what you please with it; I should prefer that being altered beyond all recognition."

"I will do everything in my power to carry out your wishes, Monsieur the Count. I should be glad, however, to receive your excellency's commands concerning the dinner."

"Really, my dear M. Bertuccio," said the count, "since you have been in Paris you have become quite nervous, and apparently out of your element; you no longer seem to understand me."

"But surely your excellency will be so good as to inform me whom you are expecting to receive?"

"I do not yet know myself; neither is it necessary that you should know. Lucullus dines with Lucullus; that is quite sufficient." Bertuccio bowed and left the room.

CHAPTER LV

MAJOR CAVALCANTI

THE count and Baptistin had told the truth when they announced to Morcerf the proposed visit of the major, which had served Monte Cristo as a pretext for declining the invitation which he had received from Albert. Seven o'clock had just struck; and M. Bertuccio, according to the command which had been given him, had two hours before left for Auteuil, when a *fiacre* stopped at the door of the hotel, and after depositing its occupant at the gate, immediately hurried away as if ashamed of its employment. The individual who alighted from the vehicle was about fifty-two years of age, dressed in one of those green surtouts ornamented with black frogs, which have so long maintained their popularity all over Europe. He wore trousers of blue cloth, boots tolerably clean but not of the brightest polish and a little too thick in the soles, buckskin gloves, a hat somewhat resembling in shape those usually worn by the gendarmes, and a black cravat striped with white, which, if the proprietor had not worn it of his own free will, might have passed for a halter. Such was the picturesque costume of the person who rang at the gate and demanded if it was not No. 30 in the Avenue de Champs-Elysées that M. le Comte de Monte Cristo inhabited, and who, being answered by the porter in the

affirmative, entered, closed the gate after him, and began to ascend the steps of the house.

The small and angular head of the individual in question, his white hair and thick grey mustache, caused him to be easily recognised by Baptistin, who had received an exact description of the expected visitor, and who was awaiting him in the hall. Therefore, scarcely had the stranger time to pronounce his name before the count was apprised of his arrival. He was ushered into a simple and elegant drawing-room, and the count rose to meet him with a smiling air. "Ah, my dear sir, you are most welcome; I was expecting you."

"Indeed," said the Italian, "your excellency expected me?"

"Yes; I had been notified that I should see you to-day at seven o'clock."

"Then you have received full information concerning my arrival?"

"Decidedly."

"Ah, so much the better; I feared this little precaution might have been forgotten."

"What precaution?"

"That of informing you beforehand of my coming."

"Oh, no, it has not."

"But you are sure you are not mistaken?"

"I am sure of it."

"It really was I whom your excellency expected at seven o'clock this evening?"

"I will prove it to you beyond a doubt."

"Oh, no; never mind that," said the Italian; "it is not worth the trouble."

"Yes, yes," said Monte Cristo. His visitor appeared slightly uneasy. "Let me see," said the count; "are you not M. le Marquis Bartolomeo Cavalcanti?"

"Bartolomeo Cavalcanti," joyfully replied the Italian; "yes, I am really he."

"Ex-major in the Austrian service?"

"Was I a major?" timidly asked the old soldier.

"Yes," said Monte Cristo, "you were a major; that is the title the French give to the post which you filled in Italy."

"Very good," said the major; "I do not demand more, you understand—"

"Your visit here to-day is not of your own suggestion, is it?" said Monte Cristo.

"No, certainly not."

"You were sent by some other person?

"Yes."

"By the excellent Abbé Busoni?"

"Exactly so," said the delighted major.

"And you have a letter?"

"Yes, there it is."

"Give it me, then;" and Monte Cristo took the letter, which he opened and read. The major looked at the count with his large staring eyes, and then took a survey of the apartment; but his gaze almost immediately reverted to the proprietor of the room. "Yes, yes, I see. 'Major Cavalcanti, a worthy patrician of Lucca, a descendant of the Cavalcanti, of Florence,'" continued Monte Cristo, reading aloud, "'possessing an income of half a million.'" Monte Cristo raised his eyes from the paper and bowed. "Half a million," said he, "magnificent!"

"Half a million, is it!" said the major.

"Yes, in so many words; and it must be so, for the abbé knows correctly the amount of all the largest fortunes in Europe."

"Be it half a million, then; but on my word of honour I had no idea that it was so much."

"Because you are robbed by your steward. You must make some reformation in that quarter."

"You have opened my eyes," said the Italian, gravely; "I will show the gentleman the door."

Monte Cristo resumed the perusal of the letter: "'And who only needs one thing more to make him happy.'"

"Yes, indeed; but one!" said the major, with a sigh.

"'Which is to recover a lost and adored son.'"

"A lost and adored son!"

"'Stolen away in his infancy, either by an enemy of his noble family or by the gypsies.'"

"At the age of five years!" said the major, with a deep sigh and raising his eyes to heaven.

"Unhappy father!" said Monte Cristo. The count continued: "'I have given him renewed life and hope in the assurance that you have the power of restoring the son whom he has vainly sought for fifteen years.'" The major looked at the count with an indescribable expression of anxiety. "I have the power of so doing," said Monte Cristo.

The major recovered his self-possession. "Ah, ah!" said he, "the letter was true then to the end?"

"Did you doubt it, M. Bartolomeo?"

"No, indeed; certainly not. A good man, a man holding a religious office, as does the Abbé Busoni, could not condescend

to deceive or play off a joke; but your excellency has not read all."

"Ah, true!" said Monte Cristo; "there is a postscript."

"Yes, yes," repeated the major; "yes—there—is—a—postscript."

"'In order to save Major Cavalcanti the trouble of drawing on his banker, I send him a draft for two thousand livres to defray his travelling expenses, and credit on you for the further sum of forty-eight thousand, which you still owe me.'"

The major awaited the conclusion of the postscript apparently with great anxiety.

"Very good," said the count.

"He said 'very good,'" muttered the major; "then—monsieur—" replied he.

"Then what?" asked Monte Cristo.

"Then the postscript—"

"Well! what of the postscript?"

"Then the postscript is as favourably received by you as the rest of the letter?"

"Certainly; the Abbé Busoni and myself have a small account open between us. I do not remember if it is exactly forty-eight thousand livres which I am still owing him; but I dare say we shall not dispute the difference. You attached great importance, then, to this postscript, my dear M. Cavalcanti?"

"I must explain to you," said the major, "that fully confiding in the signature of the Abbé Busoni, I had not provided myself with any other funds; so that if this resource had failed me, I should have found myself very unpleasantly situated in Paris."

"Is it possible that a man of your standing should be embarrassed anywhere?" said Monte Cristo.

"Why, really, I know no one," said the major.

"But then you yourself are known to others?"

"Yes, I am known, so that—"

"Proceed, my dear M. Cavalcanti."

"So that you will remit to me these forty-eight thousand livres?"

"Certainly; at your first request." The major's eyes dilated with pleasing astonishment. "But sit down," said Monte Cristo; "really I do not know what I have been thinking of,—I have kept you standing for the last quarter of an hour."

"Don't mention it."

The major drew an armchair towards him, and proceeded to seat himself.

"Now," said the count, "will you take something,—a glass of port, sherry, or wine of Alicante?"

"Wine of Alicante, if you please; it is my favourite wine."

"I have some which is excellent. You will take a biscuit with it, will you not?"

"Yes, I will take a biscuit, as you are so obliging."

Monte Cristo rang; Baptistin appeared. The count advanced to meet him. "Well?" said he, in a low voice.

"The young man is here," said the *valet de chambre*, in the same tone.

"Into what room did you take him?"

"Into the blue drawing-room, according to your excellency's orders."

"That's right; now bring the wine of Alicante and some biscuits."

Baptistin left the room.

"Really," said the major, "I am quite ashamed of the trouble I am giving you."

"Pray don't mention such a thing," said the count.

Baptistin re-entered with glasses, wine, and biscuits. The count filled one glass, but in the other he only poured a few drops of the ruby-coloured liquid. The bottle was covered with spider's webs, and all the other signs which indicate the age of wine more truly than do wrinkles on the face of a man. The major made a wise choice; he took the full glass and a biscuit. The count told Baptistin to leave the plate within reach of his guest, who began by sipping the Alicante with an expression of great satisfaction, and then delicately steeped his biscuit in the wine.

"So, sir, you inhabited Lucca, did you? You were rich, noble, held in great esteem,—had all that could render a man happy?"

"All," said the major, hastily swallowing his biscuit, "positively all."

"And yet there was one thing wanting in order to complete your happiness?"

"Only one thing," said the Italian.

"And that one thing your lost child!"

"Ah," said the major, taking a second biscuit, "that consummation of my happiness was indeed wanting." The worthy major raised his eyes to heaven and sighed.

"Let me hear, then," said the count, "who this deeply-regretted son was,—for I always understood you were a bachelor."

"That was the general opinion, sir," said the major; "and I—"

"Yes," replied the count, "and you confirmed the report. A youthful indiscretion, I suppose, which you were anxious to conceal from the world at large?"

The major recovered himself, and resumed his usual calm manner, at the same time casting his eyes down, either to give himself time to compose his countenance, or to assist his imagination, all the while giving an underlook at the count, the protracted smile on whose lips still announced the same polite curiosity.

"Yes," said the major; "I did wish this fault to be hidden from every eye."

"Not on your own account, surely," replied Monte Cristo: "for a man is above all these things?"

"Oh, no, certainly not on my own account," said the major, with a smile, and a shake of the head.

"But for the sake of the mother?" said the count.

"Yes, for the mother's sake,—his poor mother!" cried the major, taking a third biscuit.

"Take some more wine, my dear Cavalcanti," said the count, pouring out for him a second glass of Alicante; "your emotion has quite overcome you."

"His poor mother!" murmured the major, trying to ascertain whether the will was powerful enough to act on the lachrymal gland, so as to moisten the corner of his eye with a false tear.

"She belonged to one of the first families in Italy, I think, did she not?"

"She was of a noble family of Fiesole, Monsieur the Count."

"And her name was—"

"Do you desire to know her name?"

"Oh," said Monte Cristo, "it would be quite superfluous for you to tell me, for I already know it."

"Monsieur the Count knows everything," said the Italian, bowing.

"Oliva Corsinari, was it not?"

"Oliva Corsinari!"

"A marchioness?"

"A marchioness!"

"And you married her at last, notwithstanding the opposition of her family?"

"Yes, I did so."

"And you have doubtless brought all your papers with you?" said Monte Cristo.

"What papers?"

"The certificate of your marriage with Oliva Corsinari, and the register of your child's birth."

"The register of my child's birth?"

"The register of the birth of Andrea Cavalcanti,—of your son; is not his name Andrea?"

"I believe so," said the major.

"What! you believe so?"

"I dare not positively assert it, as he has been lost for so long a time."

"That is true," said Monte Cristo. "Then you have all the documents with you?"

"Monsieur the Count, I regret to say that not knowing it was necessary to come provided with these papers, I neglected to bring them with me."

"That is unfortunate," returned Monte Cristo.

"Were they, then, so necessary?"

"They were indispensable."

The major passed his hand across his brow. "Ah, *per Bacco*, indispensable!"

"Certainly they were; if any one here should suggest some doubt as to the validity of your marriage or the legitimacy of your child!"

"True," said the major; "there might be doubts."

"In that case your son would be very unpleasantly situated."

"It would be fatal to his interests."

"It might cause him to fail in some desirable matrimonial speculation."

"*O peccato!*"

"You must know that in France they are very particular on these points; it is not sufficient, as in Italy, to go to the priest and say, 'We love each other, and want you to marry us.' Marriage is a civil affair in France, and in order to marry in an orthodox manner you must have papers which undeniably establish your identity."

"That is the misfortune; I have not these necessary papers."

"Fortunately, I have them," said Monte Cristo.

"You?"

"Yes."

"You have them?"

"I have them."

"Ah, indeed!" said the major, who seeing the object of his journey frustrated by the absence of the papers, feared also that his forgetfulness might give rise to some difficulty concern-

ing the forty-eight thousand livres,—"ah, indeed, that is a fortunate circumstance; yes, that really is lucky, for it never occurred to me to bring them."

"I do not at all wonder at it. One cannot think of everything; but happily the Abbé Busoni thought for you."

"He is an excellent person!"

"He is extremely prudent and thoughtful."

"He is an admirable man," said the major; "and he sent them to you?"

"Here they are."

The major clasped his hands in token of admiration.

"You married Oliva Corsinari in the church of San Paolo del Monte Cattini; here is the priest's certificate."

"Yes, indeed; there it is," said the Italian, looking on with astonishment.

"And here is Andrea Cavalcanti's baptismal register, given by the curé of Saravezza."

"All quite correct."

"Take these documents, then; they do not concern me. You will give them to your son, who will of course take great care of them."

"I should think so, indeed! If he were to lose them—"

"Well, and if he were to lose them?" said Monte Cristo.

"In that case," replied the major, "it would be necessary to write for duplicates; and it would be some time before they could be obtained."

"It would be a difficult matter to arrange," said Monte Cristo.

"Almost an impossibility," replied the major.

"I am very glad to see that you understand the value of these papers."

"I regard them as invaluable."

"Now," said Monte Cristo, "as to the mother of the young man—"

"As to the mother of the young man—" repeated the Italian, with anxiety.

"As regards the Marquise Corsinari—"

"Really," said the major, before whom difficulties seemed to spring up, "will she be wanted in any way?"

"No, sir," replied Monte Cristo; "besides, has she not—"

"Yes, yes," said the major; "she has—"

"Paid the last debt of nature?"

"Alas! yes," returned the Italian.

"I knew that," said Monte Cristo; "she has been dead these ten years."

"And I am still mourning her loss!" exclaimed the major, drawing from his pocket a checked handkerchief, and alternately wiping first the right and then the left eye.

"What would you have?" said Monte Cristo; "we are all mortal. Now you understand, my dear M. Cavalcanti, that it is useless for you to tell people in France that you have been separated from your son for fifteen years. Stories of gypsies who steal children are not at all in vogue in this part of the world, and would not be believed. You sent him for his education to a college in one of the provinces, and now you wish him to complete his education in the Parisian world. That is the reason which has induced you to leave Via Reggio, where you have lived since the death of your wife. That will be sufficient."

"You think so?"

"Certainly."

"Very well, then."

"If they should hear of the separation—"

"Ah, yes; what could I say?"

"That an unfaithful tutor, bought over by the enemies of your family—"

"By the Corsinari?"

"Precisely. Had stolen away this child, in order that your name might become extinct."

"That will do well, since he is an only son."

"Well, now that all is arranged; now that these newly-awakened remembrances cannot be easily forgotten,—you have doubtless already guessed that I was preparing a surprise for you?"

"An agreeable one?" asked the Italian.

"Ah, I see the eye of a father is no more to be deceived than his heart."

"Hum!" said the major.

"Some one has told you the secret; or perhaps you guessed that he was here."

"That who was here?"

"Your child—your son—your Andrea!"

"I did guess it," replied the major, with the greatest *sang-froid* possible. "Then he is here?"

"He is," said Monte Cristo; "when the *valet de chambre* came in just now he told me of his arrival."

"Ah! very well! very well!" said the major, clutching the buttons of his coat at each exclamation which he made.

"My dear sir," said Monte Cristo, "I understand all your emotion; you must have time to recover yourself. I will in

the meantime go and prepare the young man for this much-desired interview, for I presume that he is not less impatient for it than yourself."

"I should imagine so," said Cavalcanti.

"Well, in a quarter of an hour he shall be with you."

"You will bring him, then? You carry your goodness so far as even to present him to me yourself?"

"No; I do not wish to come between a father and son. Your interview will be private. But do not be uneasy; even if the powerful voice of nature should be silent, you cannot well mistake him. He will enter by this door. He is a fine young man of fair complexion,—a little too fair, perhaps,—and pleasing manners; but you will see and judge for yourself."

"By the way," said the major, "you know I have only the two thousand livres which the Abbé Busoni sent me; this sum I have expended on travelling expenses, and—"

"And you want money; that is a matter of course, my dear M. Cavalcanti. Well, here are eight thousand livres on account."

The major's eyes sparkled brilliantly.

"It is forty thousand livres which I now owe you," said Monte Cristo.

"Does your excellency wish for a receipt?" said the major, at the same time slipping the money into the inner pocket of his coat.

"For what?" said the count.

"I thought you might want it to show the Abbé Busoni."

"Well, when you receive the remaining forty thousand you shall give me a receipt in full. Between honest men such precautions are unnecessary."

"Ah! yes, that is so," said the major; "between honest men."

"One word more," said Monte Cristo.

"Say on."

"You will permit me to make a suggestion?"

"Certainly; I request it."

"Then I should advise you to leave off wearing that style of dress."

"Indeed!" said the major, regarding himself with an air of satisfaction.

"Yes. It may be worn at Via Reggio; but that costume, however elegant in itself, has long been out of fashion in Paris."

"That's unfortunate."

"Oh, if you really are attached to your old mode of dress, you can easily resume it when you leave Paris."

"But what shall I wear?"

"What you have in your trunks."

"In my trunks? I have but one portmanteau."

"I dare say you have nothing else with you. What is the use of boring one's self with so many things? Besides, an old soldier always likes to march with as little baggage as possible."

"That is just why—"

"But you are a man of foresight and prudence, therefore you sent your luggage on before you. It has arrived at the Hôtel des Princes, Rue Richelieu. It is there you are to take up your quarters."

"Then in these trunks—"

"I presume you have given orders to your *valet de chambre* to put in all you are likely to need,—your plain clothes and your uniform. On grand occasions you must wear your uniform; that will look very well. Do not forget your crosses. They still laugh at them in France, and yet always wear them, for all that."

"Very well! very well!" said the major, who passed from rapture to rapture.

"Now," said Monte Cristo, "that you have fortified yourself against all painful excitement, prepare yourself, my dear M. Cavalcanti, to meet your lost Andrea."

Saying which Monte Cristo bowed and disappeared behind the tapestry, leaving the major in an ecstasy of delight.

CHAPTER LVI

ANDREA CAVALCANTI

The Count of Monte Cristo entered the adjoining room, which Baptistin had designated as the blue drawing-room, and found there a young man of graceful demeanour and elegant appearance, who had arrived in a *fiacre* about half an hour previously. Baptistin had not found any difficulty in recognising the individual who presented himself at the door for admittance. He was certainly the tall young man with light hair, red beard, black eyes, and brilliant complexion, whom his master had so particularly described to him. When the count entered the room, the young man was carelessly stretched on a sofa, tapping his boot with the gold-headed cane which he held in his hand. On perceiving the count he rose quickly. "The Count of Monte Cristo, I believe?" said he.

"Yes, monsieur; and I think I have the honour of addressing M. le Vicomte Andrea Cavalcanti?"

"Vicomte Andrea Cavalcanti," repeated the young man, accompanying his words with a bow.

"You are charged with a letter of introduction addressed to me, are you not?" said the count.

"I did not mention that, because the signature seemed to me so strange."

"'Sinbad the Sailor,' is it not?"

"Exactly so. Now, as I have never known any Sinbad, with the exception of the one celebrated in the 'Thousand and One Nights'—"

"Well! it is one of his descendants, and a great friend of mine. He is a very rich Englishman, eccentric almost to insanity; and his real name is Lord Wilmore."

"Ah, indeed! then that explains everything," said Andrea; "that is extraordinary. He is, then, the same Englishman whom I met—at—yes, very well! Monsieur the Count, I am at your service."

"If what you say be true," replied the count, smiling, "perhaps you will be kind enough to give me some account of yourself and your family?"

"Certainly, I will do so," said the young man, with a readiness which proved the soundness of his memory. "I am, as you have said, the Vicomte Andrea Cavalcanti, son of Major Bartolomeo Cavalcanti,—a descendant of the Cavalcanti whose names are inscribed in the Golden Book at Florence. Our family, although still rich (for my father's income amounts to half a million), has experienced many misfortunes, and I myself was at the age of five years taken away by the treachery of my tutor, so that for fifteen years I have not seen the author of my existence. Since I have arrived at years of discretion and become my own master, I have been constantly seeking him, but all in vain. At length I received this letter from your friend, which states that my father is in Paris, and authorises me to address myself to you for information respecting him."

"Really, all you have related to me is exceedingly interesting," said Monte Cristo, observing the young man with a gloomy satisfaction; "and you have done well to conform in everything to the wishes of my friend Sinbad, for your father is indeed here and is seeking you."

The count, from the moment of his first entering the drawing-room, had not once lost sight of the expression of the young man's countenance. He had admired the assurance of his look

and the firmness of his voice; but at these words, so natural in themselves, "Your father is indeed here and is seeking you," young Andrea started, and exclaimed, "My father! is my father here?"

"Most undoubtedly," replied Monte Cristo; "your father, the Major Bartolomeo Cavalcanti."

The expression of terror which for the moment had overspread the features of the young man disappeared, almost immediately. "Ah, yes! that is the name, certainly," he said; "Major Bartolomeo Cavalcanti. And you really mean to say, Monsieur the Count, that my dear father is here?"

"Yes, monsieur; and I can even add that I have only just left his company. The history which he related to me of his lost son touched me to the quick; indeed, his griefs, hopes, and fears on that subject might furnish material for a most touching and pathetic poem. At length he one day received a letter, stating that the parties who had deprived him of his son now offered to restore him, or at least to give notice where he might be found, on condition of receiving a large sum of money by way of ransom. Your father did not hesitate an instant, and the sum was sent to the frontier of Piedmont, with a passport signed for Italy. You were in the south of France, I think?"

"Yes," replied Andrea, with an embarrassed air, "I was in the south of France."

"A carriage was to await you at Nice?"

"Precisely so; and it conveyed me from Nice to Genoa, from Genoa to Turin, from Turin to Chambéry, from Chambéry to Pont de Beauvoisin, and from Pont de Beauvoisin to Paris."

"Indeed! then your father ought to have met with you on the road, for it is exactly the same route which he himself took; and that is how we have been able to trace your journey to this place."

"But," said Andrea, "if my father had met me, I doubt if he would have recognised me; I must be somewhat altered since he last saw me."

"Oh! the voice of nature," said Monte Cristo.

"True," said the young man, "I had not thought of the voice of nature."

"Now," replied Monte Cristo, "there is only one source of uneasiness left in your father's mind, which is this: he is anxious to know how you have been employed during your long absence from him; how you have been treated by your persecutors; and if they have conducted themselves towards you with all the deference due to your rank. Finally, he is

anxious to see if you have been fortunate enough to escape the bad moral influence to which you have been exposed, and which is infinitely more to be dreaded than any physical suffering; he wishes to discover if the fine abilities with which nature had endowed you have been weakened by want of culture; and in short, whether you consider yourself capable of resuming and retaining in the world the high position to which your rank entitles you."

"Monsieur," stammered the young man, quite astounded, "I hope no false report—"

"As for myself, I first heard you spoken of by my friend Wilmore the philanthropist. I believe he found you in some unpleasant position, but do not know of what nature, for I did not ask; I am not inquisitive. Your misfortunes engaged his sympathies, so that you must have been interesting. He told me that he was anxious to restore you to the position which you had lost, and that he would seek your father until he found him. He did seek, and has found him apparently, since he is here now; and finally my friend apprised me of your coming, and gave me a few other instructions relative to your future fortune. I am quite aware that my friend Wilmore is an original, but he is sincere, and as rich as a gold mine; consequently, he may indulge his eccentricities without any fear of their ruining him, and I have promised to adhere to his instructions. Now, sir, pray do not be offended at the question I am about to put to you, as it comes in the way of my duty as your patron. I would wish to know if the misfortunes which have happened to you—misfortunes entirely beyond your control, and which in no degree diminish my regard for you—I would wish to know if they have not in some measure contributed to render you a stranger to the world in which your fortune and your name entitle you to make a conspicuous figure?"

"Monsieur," returned the young man, recovering his assurance as the count proceeded, "make your mind easy on this score. Those who took me from my father, and who always intended sooner or later to sell me again to him, as they have now done, calculated that in order to make the most of their bargain it would be politic to leave me in possession of all my personal and hereditary worth, and even to increase the value if possible. I have therefore received a very good education, and have been treated by these kidnappers very much as the slaves were treated in Asia Minor, whose masters made them grammarians, doctors, and philosophers, in order that they might fetch a higher price in the Roman market." Monte Cristo

smiled with satisfaction. It appeared as if he had not expected so much from M. Andrea Cavalcanti. "Besides," continued the young man, "if there did appear some defect in education, or offence against the established forms of etiquette, I suppose they would be excused, in consideration of the misfortunes which accompanied my birth and followed me through my youth."

"Well," said Monte Cristo, in an indifferent tone, "you will do as you please, viscount, for you are the master of your own actions, and are the person most concerned in the matter; but if I were you I would not divulge a word of these adventures. Your history is quite a romance; and the world, which delights in romances contained between two covers of yellow paper, strangely mistrusts those which are bound in living parchment, even though they be gilded like yourself. This is the kind of difficulty which I wished to represent to you, Monsieur the Viscount. You would hardly have recited to any one your touching history before it would go forth to the world, and be deemed unlikely and unnatural. You would be no longer a lost child found, but you would be looked upon as an upstart who had sprung up like a mushroom in the night. You might excite a little curiosity, but it is not every one who likes to be made the centre of observation and the subject of unpleasant remark."

"I agree with you, Monsieur the Count," said the young man, turning pale in spite of himself under the scrutinising look of Monte Cristo; "such consequences would be extremely unpleasant."

"Nevertheless, you must not exaggerate the evil," said Monte Cristo, "or by endeavouring to avoid one fault you will fall into another. You must resolve upon one simple and single line of conduct; and for a man of your intelligence this plan is as easy as it is necessary. You must form honourable friendships, and by that means counteract the prejudice which may attach to the obscurity of your former life." Andrea visibly changed countenance. "I would offer myself as your surety and friendly adviser," said Monte Cristo, "did I not possess a moral distrust of my best friends, and a sort of inclination to lead others to doubt them too; therefore in departing from this rule, I should (as the actors say) be playing a part quite out of my line, and should therefore run the risk of being hissed, which would be an act of folly."

"However, Monsieur the Count," said Andrea, "in consideration of Lord Wilmore, by whom I was recommended to you—"

"Yes, certainly," interrupted Monte Cristo; "but Lord Wilmore did not omit to inform me, my dear M. Andrea, that the season of your youth was rather a stormy one. Ah!" said the count, watching Andrea's countenance, "I do not demand any confession from you; besides, it was to prevent your needing any one that your father was sent for from Lucca. You shall soon see him. He is a little stiff and pompous in his manner, and he is disfigured by his uniform; but when it becomes known that he is in the Austrian service, all that will be pardoned. We are not generally very severe with the Austrians. In short, you will find your father a very presentable person, I assure you."

"Ah, sir, you have given me confidence; it is so long since we were separated that I have not the least remembrance of him."

"And besides, you know that in the eyes of the world a large fortune covers all defects."

"My father, then, is really rich, monsieur?"

"He is a millionaire,—his income is five hundred thousand livres."

"Then," said the young man, with anxiety, "I shall be sure to be placed in an agreeable position."

"One of the most agreeable possible, my dear monsieur; he will allow you an income of fifty thousand livres per annum during the whole time of your stay in Paris."

"In that case I shall always remain here."

"You cannot control circumstances, my dear monsieur; 'man proposes, and God disposes.'"

Andrea sighed. "But," said he, "so long as I do remain in Paris, and no circumstance compels me to go away, do you mean to tell me that I may rely on receiving the sum you just now mentioned to me?"

"You may."

"Shall I receive it from my father?" asked Andrea, with some uneasiness.

"Yes, you will receive it from your father personally; but Lord Wilmore will be the security for the money. He has, at the request of your father, opened an account of five thousand livres a month at M. Danglars's, which is one of the safest banks in Paris."

"And does my father mean to remain long in Paris?" asked Andrea.

"Only a few days," replied Monte Cristo. "His service does not allow him to absent himself more than two or three weeks at a time."

"Ah, my dear father!" exclaimed Andrea, evidently charmed with the idea of his speedy departure.

"Therefore," said Monte Cristo, feigning to mistake his meaning,—"therefore I will not for another instant retard the pleasure of your meeting. Are you prepared to embrace your worthy father?"

"I hope you do not doubt it."

"Go, then, into the drawing-room, my young friend, where you will find your father awaiting you."

Andrea made a low bow to the count, and entered the adjoining room. Monte Cristo watched him till he disappeared, and then touched a spring made to look like a picture, which in sliding partially from the frame discovered to view a small interstice, which was so cleverly contrived that it revealed all that was passing in the drawing-room now occupied by Cavalcanti and Andrea. The young man closed the door behind him, and advanced towards the major, who had risen when he heard steps approaching him. "Ah! my dear father!" said Andrea, in a loud voice, in order that the count might hear him in the next room, "is it really you?"

"How do you do, my dear son?" said the major, gravely.

"After so many years of painful separation," said Andrea, in the same tone of voice, and glancing towards the door, "what a happiness it is to meet again!"

"Indeed it is, after so long a separation."

"Will you not embrace me, sir?" said Andrea.

"If you wish it, my son," said the major; and the two men embraced each other after the fashion of actors on the stage; that is to say, each rested his head on the other's shoulder.

"Then we are once more reunited?" said Andrea.

"Once more!" replied the major.

"Never more to be separated?"

"Why as to that, I think, my dear son, you must be by this time so accustomed to France as to look upon it almost as your own country."

"The fact is," said the young man, "that I should be exceedingly grieved to leave Paris."

"As for me, you must know I cannot possibly live out of Lucca; therefore I shall return to Italy as soon as I can."

"But before you leave France, my dear father, I hope you will put me in possession of the documents which will be necessary to prove my descent."

"Certainly, I am come expressly on that account; it has cost me so much trouble to find you—so that I might give them

to you—that I have no wish to begin that search again; it would occupy all the few remaining years of my life."

"Where are these papers, then?"

"Here they are."

Andrea seized the certificate of his father's marriage and that of his own baptism; and after having opened them with all the eagerness which might be expected under the circumstances, he read them with a facility which proved that he was accustomed to similar documents, and with an expressien which plainly denoted an unusual interest in the contents. When he had perused the documents, an indefinable expression of pleasure lighted up his countenance; and looking at the major with a most peculiar smile, he said in very excellent Tuscan, "Then there are no longer galleys in Italy?"

The major drew himself up to his full height. "Why? What do you mean by that question?"

"Since documents like these can be made with impunity. In France, my very dear father, for half as much as that they would send you to breathe the air of Toulon for five years."

"Will you be good enough to explain your meaning?" said the major, endeavouring to assume a majestic air.

"My dear M. Cavalcanti," said Andrea, taking the major by the arm in a confidential manner, "how much are you paid for being my father?" The major was about to speak, when Andrea continued in a low voice, "Nonsense! I am going to set you an example of confidence; they give me fifty thousand livres a year to be your son. Consequently, you can understand I shall never be disposed to deny that you are my father." The major looked anxiously around him. "Make yourself easy; we are quite alone," said Andrea. "Besides, we are conversing in Italian."

"Well, then," replied the major, "they paid me fifty thousand livres down."

"M. Cavalcanti," said Andrea, "do you believe in fairy tales?"

"I used not to do so; but I really feel now almost obliged to have faith in them."

"You have, then, had some proofs?"

The major drew from his pocket a handful of gold. "Palpable," said he, "as you perceive."

"You think, then, that I may rely on the count's promises?"

"Certainly I do."

"You are sure he will keep his word with me?"

"To the letter; but at the same time, remember we must

continue to play our respective parts. I as a tender father—"

"And I as a dutiful son, as they choose that I shall be descended from you."

"Whom do you mean by they?"

"*Ma foi!* I can hardly tell, but I was alluding to those who wrote the letter; you received one, did you not?"

"Yes."

"From whom?"

"From a certain Abbé Busoni."

"Have you any knowledge of him?"

"No, I have never seen him."

"What did he say in the letter?"

"You will promise not to betray me?"

"Rest assured of that; you well know that our interests are the same."

"Then read for yourself;" and the major gave a letter into the young man's hand. Andrea read in a low voice:—

> You are poor; a miserable old age awaits you. Would you like to become rich, or at least independent? Set out immediately for Paris, and demand of the Count of Monte Cristo, Avenue des Champs Elysées, No. 30, the son whom you had by the Marquise Corsinari, and who was taken from you at five years of age. This son is named Andrea Cavalcanti. In order that you may not doubt the kind intention of the writer of this letter, you will find enclosed an order for two thousand livres, payable in Florence, at the house of M. Gozzi; also a letter of introduction to M. le Comte de Monte Cristo, on whom I give you a draft for forty-eight thousand livres. Remember to go to the count May 26, at seven o'clock in the evening.—ABBÉ BUSONI.

"It is the same."

"What do you mean?" said the major.

"I mean that I received a letter almost to the same effect."

"You?"

"Yes."

"From the Abbé Busoni?"

"No."

"From whom, then?"

"From an Englishman, called Lord Wilmore, who takes the name of Sinbad the Sailor."

"And of whom you have no more knowledge than I of the Abbé Busoni."

"You are mistaken; there I am in advance of you."

"You have seen him, then?"

"Yes, once."

"Where?"

"Ah! that is just what I cannot tell you; if I did I should make you as wise as myself, which it is not my intention to do."

"And what did the letter contain?"

"Read it."

You are poor, and your future prospects are dark and gloomy. Do you wish for a name; should you like to be rich, and your own master?

"*Ma foi!*" said the young man; "was it possible there could be two answers to such a question?"

Take the post-chaise which you will find waiting at the Porte de Gênés, as you enter Nice; pass through Turin, Chambéry, and Pont de Beauvoisin. Go to the Count of Monte Cristo, Avenue des Champs Elysées, May 26, at seven o'clock in the evening, and demand of him your father. You are the son of the Marquis Cavalcanti and the Marquise Oliva Corsinari. The marquis will give you some papers which will certify this fact, and authorise you to appear under that name in the Parisian world. As to your rank, an annual income of fifty thousand livres will enable you to support it admirably. I enclose a draft for five thousand livres on M. Ferrea, banker at Nice, and also a letter of introduction to the Count of Monte Cristo, whom I have directed to supply all your wants.—SINBAD THE SAILOR.

"Humph!" said the major; "very good! You have seen the count, you say?"

"I have only just left him."

"And has he conformed to all which the letter specified?"

"He has."

"Do you understand it?"

"Not in the least."

"There is a dupe somewhere."

"At all events, it is neither you nor I."

"Certainly not."

"Well, then—"

"It is none of our business, you think?"

"Precisely; I was about to say so. Let us play the game to the end, and go it blind."

"Agreed; you will see that I shall properly sustain my part."

"I have not doubted it for a moment, my dear father."

Monte Cristo chose this moment for re-entering the drawing-room. On hearing the sound of his footsteps, the two men threw themselves in each other's arms; the count found them thus embracing.

"Well, marquis," said Monte Cristo, "you appear to be in no

way disappointed in the son whom your good fortune has restored to you."

"Ah, Monsieur the Count, I am overwhelmed with delight."

"And what are your feelings?" said Monte Cristo, turning to the young man.

"As for me, my heart is overflowing with happiness."

"Happy father! happy son!" said the count.

"There is only one thing which grieves me," observed the major, "and that is the necessity for my leaving Paris so soon."

"Ah! my dear M. Cavalcanti," said Monte Cristo, "I trust you will not leave before I have had the honour of presenting you to some of my friends."

"I am at your service, monsieur," replied the major.

"Now, monsieur," said Monte Cristo, addressing Andrea, "make your confession."

"To whom?"

"Why, to your father; tell him something of the state of your finances."

"Ah, the devil!" said Andrea, "you have touched upon a tender chord."

"Do you hear what he says, major?"

"Certainly I do."

"But do you understand?"

"I do."

"Your son says he requires money."

"Well! what would you have me do?" said the major.

"You should furnish him with some, of course," replied Monte Cristo.

"I?"

"Yes, you!" said the count, at the same time advancing towards Andrea, and slipping a packet of bank-notes into the young man's hand.

"What is this?"

"It is from your father."

"From my father?"

"Yes; did you not tell him just now that you wanted money? Well, he deputes me to give you this."

"Am I to consider this as part of my income on account?"

"No; it is towards the expenses of your settling in Paris."

"Ah! how good my dear father is!"

"Silence!" said Monte Cristo; "he does not wish you to know that it comes from him."

"I fully appreciate his delicacy," said Andrea, cramming the notes hastily into his pocket.

"And now, gentlemen, I wish you good-night," said Monte Cristo.

"And when shall we have the honour of seeing you again, Monsieur the Count?" asked Cavalcanti.

"Ah, yes!" said Andrea, "when may we hope for that pleasure?"

"On Saturday, if you will—yes—let me see—Saturday. I am to dine at my country-house, at Auteuil, on that day, Rue la Fontaine, No. 28. Several persons are invited, and among others M. Danglars, your banker. I will introduce you to him; it will be necessary that he should know you both in order to pay you your money."

"Full dress?" said the major, half-aloud.

"Oh, yes, certainly!" said the count: "uniform, cross, small-clothes."

"And how shall I be dressed?" demanded Andrea.

"Oh, very simply; black trousers, polished boots, white waistcoat, either a black or blue coat, and a long cravat. Go to Blin or Veronique for your dress. Baptistin will tell you where they live, if you do not know where to find them. The less pretension there is in your dress the better will be the effect, as you are a rich man. If you mean to buy any horses, get them of Devedeux; and if you purchase a ph.eton, go to Baptiste for it."

"At what hour shall we come?" asked the young man.

"About half-past six."

"We will be with you at that time," said the major.

The two Cavalcanti bowed to the count, and left the house. Monte Cristo went to the window, and saw them crossing the street, arm-in-arm. "There go two miscreants!" said he. "It is a pity they are not really related!" Then, after an instant of gloomy reflection, "Come, I will go to see the Morrels!" said he; "I think that disgust is even more sickening than hatred."

CHAPTER LVII

THE TRYSTING-PLACE

Our readers must now allow us to transport them again to the enclosure surrounding M. de Villefort's house, and behind the gate, half-screened from view by the large chestnut-trees, we shall find some persons of our acquaintance. This time Maximilian was the first to arrive. He was intently watching for a

shadow to appear among the trees, and awaiting with anxiety the sound of a light step on the gravel walk. At length the long-desired sound was heard, and instead of one figure, as he had expected, he perceived that two were approaching him. The delay of Valentine had been occasioned by a visit from Madame Danglars and Eugénie, which had been prolonged beyond the time at which she was expected. Then, that she might not fail in her promise to Maximilian, she proposed to Mademoiselle Danglars that they should take a walk in the garden, being anxious to show that the delay, which was doubtless a cause of vexation to him, was not occasioned by any neglect on her part. The young man, with the intuitive perception of a lover, quickly understood the circumstances in which she was involuntarily placed; and he was comforted. Besides, although she avoided coming within speaking distance, Valentine arranged so that Maximilian could see her pass and repass; and each time she did so, she managed, unperceived by her companion, to cast an expressive look at the young man, which seemed to say, "Have patience! You see it is not my fault." And Maximilian was patient, and employed himself in mentally contrasting the two girls,—one fair, with soft, languishing eyes, a figure gracefully bending like a weeping willow; the other a brunette, with a fierce and haughty expression, and as upright as a poplar. It is unnecessary to state that in the eyes of the young man, Valentine did not suffer by the contrast. At the end of about half an hour the ladies retired, and Maximilian understood that Mademoiselle Danglars's visit had at last come to a conclusion. In a few minutes Valentine re-entered the garden alone. For fear that any one should be observing her return, she walked slowly; and instead of immediately directing her steps towards the gate, she seated herself on a bank, and carefully looked around, to convince herself that she was not watched. Presently she rose and proceeded quickly to the gate.

"Good-evening, Valentine," said a voice.

"Good-evening, Maximilian; I have kept you waiting, but you saw the cause of my delay."

"Yes, I recognised Mademoiselle Danglars I was not aware that you were so intimate with her."

"Who told you we were intimate, Maximilian?"

"No one, but you appeared to be so; from the manner in which you walked and talked together one would have thought you were two school-girls telling your secrets to each other."

"We were having a confidential conversation," returned

Valentine. "She was owning to me her repugnance to the marriage with M. de Morcerf; and I on the other hand was confessing to her how wretched it made me to think of marrying M. d'Epinay."

"Dear Valentine!"

"That will account to you for the unreserved manner which you observed between me and Eugénie; it was because in speaking of the man whom I cannot love, I thought of the man I love."

"Ah, how good you are in every way, Valentine! You possess a quality which can never belong to Mademoiselle Danglars! It is that indefinable charm which is to a woman what perfume is to the flower and flavour to the fruit; for the beauty of either is not the only quality we seek."

"It is your love which makes you look upon everything in that light."

"No, Valentine, I assure you. I was observing you both when you were walking in the garden, and on my honour, without at all wishing to depreciate the beauty of Mademoiselle Danglars, I cannot understand how any man can really love her."

"It is because, as you said, Maximilian, I was there; and my presence made you unjust."

"No; but tell me—it is a question of simple curiosity which was suggested by certain ideas passing in my mind relative to Mademoiselle Danglars—"

"Oh! very unjust ideas, I know without knowing what they are. When you sit in judgment on us poor women, we cannot expect indulgence."

"You cannot at least deny that you are very harsh judges of each other."

"If we are so, it is because we generally judge under the influence of excitement. But to return to your question."

"Does Mademoiselle Danglars object to this marriage with M. de Morcerf on account of loving another?"

"I told you I was not on terms of strict intimacy with Eugénie."

"Yes; but girls tell each other secrets without being particularly intimate. Own, now, that you did question her on the subject. Ah! I see you are smiling."

"If you are already aware of the conversation that passed, the wooden partition which interposed between us and you has proved but a slight security."

"Come, what did she say?"

"She told me that she loved no one," said Valentine; "that

she disliked the idea of being married; that she would infinitely prefer leading an independent and unfettered life; and that she almost wished her father might lose his fortune, that she might become an artist like her friend, Mademoiselle Louise d'Armilly."

"Ah, you see—"

"Well, what does that prove?" asked Valentine.

"Nothing," replied Maximilian, smiling.

"Then why do you smile."

"Why, you yourself had your eyes fixed on me."

"Do you wish me to go?"

"Ah, no, no! but let us talk of you."

"True; we have scarcely ten minutes more to pass together."

"Good heavens!" said Maximilian, in consternation.

"Yes, Maximilian, you are right," said Valentine, in a tone of melancholy; "I am but a poor friend to you. What a life I cause you to lead, poor Maximilian, you who are formed for happiness! I bitterly reproach myself, I assure you."

"Well, what does it signify, Valentine, so long as I am satisfied, and feel that even this long and painful suspense is amply repaid by five minutes of your society, or two words from your mouth? And I have also a deep conviction that Heaven would not have created two hearts harmonising as ours do, and united us to each other almost miraculously, at last to separate us."

"That is well said, and I thank you. Be hopeful for us both, Maximilian; that will make me partly happy."

"What has happened, then, Valentine, that you leave me so soon?"

"I do not know. Madame de Villefort has sent to request my presence, as she has a communication to make on which a part of my fortune depends. Let them take my fortune, I am already too rich; and perhaps when they have taken it, they will leave me in peace and quietness. You would love me as much if I were poor, would you not, Maximilian?"

"Oh! I shall always love you. What should I care for either riches or poverty if my Valentine were near me and I felt certain that no one could deprive me of her? But do you not fear that this communication may relate to your marriage?"

"I do not think so."

"Meanwhile listen to me, Valentine, and fear nothing; for as long as I live I shall never love any one but you."

"You expect to reassure me in saying that, Maximilian?"

"Pardon me; you are right,—I was thoughtless. Well, I was about to tell you that I met M. de Morcerf the other day."

"Well?"

"M. Franz is his friend, you know."

"What then?"

"M. de Morcerf has received a letter from Franz, announcing his immediate return."

Valentine turned pale and leaned against the gate for support. "Can it really be true; and is that why Madame de Villefort has sent for me? No; the communication would not be likely to come from her."

"Why not?"

"Because—I scarcely know why—but it has appeared that Madame de Villefort secretly objects to the marriage, although she does not openly oppose it."

"Is it so? Then I feel as if I could adore Madame de Villefort."

"Do not be in such a hurry to do that," said Valentine, with a sad smile.

"If she objects to your marrying M. d'Epinay, she would be all the more likely to listen to any other proposition."

"Put no trust in that, Maximilian; Madame de Villefort finds no fault with suitors, she objects to marriage."

"Marriage! if she dislikes that so much, why did she ever marry herself?"

"You do not understand me, Maximilian. About a year ago, I talked of retiring to a convent; Madame de Villefort, in spite of all the remarks which she considered it her duty to make, secretly approved of the proposition. My father consented to it at her instigation; and it was only on account of my poor grandfather that I finally abandoned the project. You can form no idea of the expression of that old man's eye when he looks at me,—the only person in the world whom he loves, and I had almost said, by whom he is beloved in return. When he learned my resolution, I shall never forget the reproachful look which he cast on me, and the tears of utter despair which chased each other down his lifeless cheeks. Ah, Maximilian, I experienced at that moment such remorse for my intention that throwing myself at his feet, I exclaimed, 'Forgive me, pray forgive me, my dear grandfather; they may do what they will with me, I will never leave you.' When I had ceased speaking, he thankfully raised his eyes to heaven, but without uttering a word. Ah, Maximilian! I may have much to suffer, but I feel as if my grandfather's look at that moment would more than compensate for all."

"Dear Valentine, you are an angel; and I am sure I do not know how I have deserved, in sabring to the right and left among

the Bedouins,—unless indeed God has considered the fact that they are infidels,—I do not know how I have deserved that you should be sent to me. But tell me what interest Madame de Villefort can have in your remaining unmarried."

"Have I not told you that I am rich, Maximilian, too rich? I possess an income of about fifty thousand livres in right of my mother; my grandfather and my grandmother, the Marquis and Marquise de Saint-Méran, will leave me as much more; and M. Noirtier evidently intends making me his heir. My brother Edouard, who inherits nothing from his mother, will therefore be poor in comparison with me. Now, Madame de Villefort loves that child to adoration; and if I had taken the veil, all my fortune, passing to my father,—who would inherit from the marquis, the marchioness, and myself,—would go to his son."

"Ah! how strange it seems that such a young and beautiful woman should be so avaricious."

"It is not for herself that she is so, but for her son; and what you regard as a vice becomes almost a virtue when looked at in the light of maternal love."

"But could you not compromise matters, and give up a portion of your fortune to her son?"

"How could I make such a proposition, especially to a woman who always professes to be so entirely disinterested?"

"Valentine, I have always regarded our love in the light of something sacred. Consequently I have covered it with the veil of respect, and hid it in the inmost recesses of my soul; no human being, not even my sister, is aware of its existence. Valentine, will you permit me to make a confidant of a friend and reveal to him the love I bear you?"

Valentine started. "A friend, Maximilian; and who is this friend? I tremble at the idea."

"Listen, Valentine. Have you never experienced for any one an irresistible sympathy which made you feel as if, though seeing him for the first time, you had known him for a long time; and have you not sought to remember when and where you were acquainted with him; and unable to recall either time or place, have you not come to believe that it was in a former state of being, and that this sympathy is a remembrance newly awakened?"

"Yes."

"Well, that is precisely the feeling which I experienced when I first saw that extraordinary man."

"Extraordinary, did you say?"

"Yes."

"You have known him for some time, then?"

"Scarcely longer than eight or ten days."

"And do you call a man your friend whom you have only known for eight or ten days? Ah, Maximilian, I had hoped you set a higher value on the title of friend."

"Your logic is correct, Valentine; but say what you will, I can never renounce that instinctive sentiment. I believe that this man will be associated with all the good that may come to me in the future,—which sometimes his searching eye appears to foresee and his powerful hand to direct."

"He must be a prophet, then," said Valentine, smiling.

"Indeed!" said Maximilian, "I have often been almost tempted to believe that he can prophesy,—good things especially."

"Ah!" said Valentine, in a mournful tone, "do let me see this man, Maximilian; he may tell me whether I shall ever be loved sufficiently to make amends for all I have suffered."

"My poor girl! you know him already."

"I know him?"

"Yes; it was he who saved the life of your stepmother and her son."

"The Count of Monte Cristo?"

"The same."

"Ah!" cried Valentine, "he is too much the friend of Madame de Villefort ever to be mine."

"The friend of Madame de Villefort! My instinct would not deceive me on that point; I am sure that you are mistaken."

"No, indeed, I am not; for I assure you his power over our household is almost unlimited. Courted by my stepmother, who regards him as the epitome of human wisdom; admired by my father, who says he has never before heard such sublime ideas so eloquently expressed; idolised by Edouard, who notwithstanding his fear of the count's large black eyes, runs to meet him the moment he arrives and opens his hand, in which he is sure to find some delightful present,—M. de Monte Cristo appears to exert a mysterious and almost uncontrollable influence over all the members of our family."

"If such be the case, my dear Valentine, you must yourself have felt, or at all events will soon feel the effects of his presence. He meets Albert de Morcerf in Italy; it is to rescue him from the hands of the banditti. He introduces himself to Madame Danglars; it is that he may give her a royal present. Your stepmother and her son pass before his door; it is that his

Nubian may save them from destruction. This man evidently possesses the power to influence events. I never saw more simple tastes united to greater magnificence. His smile is so sweet when he addresses me that I forget it can ever be bitter to others. Ah, Valentine! tell me, has he smiled in that way upon you? If so, depend on it, you will be happy."

"Me!" said the young girl, "he never even glances at me; on the contrary, if I accidentally cross his path, he appears rather to avoid me. Ah, he is not generous, neither does he possess that supernatural penetration which you attribute to him,—for if he had, he would have perceived that I am unhappy. And if he had been generous, seeing me sad and solitary he would have used his influence to my advantage; and if, as you say, he resembles the sun, he would have warmed my heart with one of his life-giving rays. You say he loves you, Maximilian; how do you know that he does? Men pay deference to an officer like you, with a fierce mustache and a long sabre; but they think they may crush a poor weeping girl with impunity."

"Ah, Valentine! I assure you you are mistaken."

"If it were otherwise; if he treated me diplomatically,—that is to say, like a man who wishes by some means or other to obtain a footing in the house, so that he may ultimately gain the power of dictating to its occupants,—he would, if it had been but once, have honoured me with the smile which you extol so loudly; but no, he saw that I was unhappy, he understood that I could be of no use to him, and therefore paid me no regard whatever. Who knows but that in order to please Madame de Villefort and my father, he may not persecute me by every means in his power? It is not just that he should despise me thus, without any reason. Ah, forgive me," said Valentine, perceiving the effect which her words were producing on Maximilian; "I have done wrong, for I have given utterance to thoughts concerning that man which I did not even know existed in my heart. I do not deny the influence of which you speak, or that I have myself experienced it; but with me it has been productive of evil rather than good."

"Well, Valentine," said Morrel, with a sigh, "we will not discuss the matter further. I will tell him nothing."

"Alas!" said Valentine, "I see that I have given you pain. Oh, that I might press your hand while I ask your pardon? But indeed I am not prejudiced beyond the power of conviction. Tell me, what has this Count of Monte Cristo done for you?"

"I own that your question embarrasses me, Valentine, for

I cannot say that the count has rendered me any ostensible service. Still, as I have already told you, I have an instinctive affection for him, the source of which I cannot explain to you. Has the sun done anything for me? No; he warms me with his rays, and it is by his light that I see you,—nothing more. Has such and such a perfume done anything for me? No; its odour charms one of my senses,—that is all I can say when I am asked why I praise it. My friendship for him is as strange and unaccountable as his for me. A secret voice seems to whisper to me that there must be something more than chance in this sudden and unexpected friendship. In his most simple actions as well as in his most secret thoughts, I find a relation to my own. You will perhaps smile at me when I tell you that ever since I have known this man I have the absurd idea that all the good fortune which has befallen me originated from him. However, I have managed to live thirty years without this protection, you would say? No matter,—but wait; here is an example. He has invited me to dine with him on Saturday, which was a very natural thing for him to do. Well, what have I learned since? That your mother and M. de Villefort are both coming to this dinner. I shall meet them there; and who knows what future advantages may result from the interview? These are circumstances very simple apparently; but I see in them something surprising; I draw from them a strange confidence. I say to myself that this singular man, who appears to fathom the motives of every one, has purposely arranged for me to meet Monsieur and Madame de Villefort; and sometimes, I confess, I have gone so far as to try to read in his eyes whether he has divined the secret of our love."

"My good friend," said Valentine, "I should take you for a visionary, and should tremble for your reason, if I were always to hear you talk in a strain like this. Is it possible that you can see anything more than the merest chance in this meeting? Pray reflect a little. My father, who never goes out, has several times been on the point of refusing this invitation; Madame de Villefort, on the contrary, is burning with the desire of seeing this extraordinary nabob in his own house, and she has with great difficulty prevailed on my father to accompany her. No, no! it is as I have said, Maximilian; there is no one in the world of whom I can ask help but yourself and my grandfather, who is little better than a corpse."

"I see that you are right, logically speaking," said Maximilian; "but your sweet voice, which usually has such power over me, fails to convince me to-day."

"Nor do your words convince me," said Valentine; "and I own that if you have no stronger proof to give me—"

"I have another," said Maximilian, hesitating; "but—in fact, Valentine, I am myself obliged to admit that it is even more absurd than the first."

"So much the worse," said Valentine, smiling.

"It is nevertheless conclusive to my mind. My ten years of service have also confirmed my ideas on the subject of sudden inspirations, for I have several times owed my life to one of those mysterious impulses which directed me to move at once either to the right or to the left, so that the fatal bullet might pass by me."

"Dear Maximilian, why not attribute your escape to my constant prayers for your safety? When you are away, I pray no longer for myself, but for you."

"Yes, since you have known me," said Morrel, smiling; "but that cannot apply to the time previous to our acquaintance, Valentine."

"You are very provoking, and will not give me credit for anything; but let me hear this second example, which you yourself own to be absurd."

"Well, look through this opening, and you will see the beautiful new horse which I rode here."

"Ah, what a beautiful creature!" cried Valentine; "why did you not bring it close to the gate! I would have talked to it, and it would have understood me."

"It is, as you see, a very valuable animal," said Maximilian. "Well, you know that my means are limited, and that I am what they call a reasonable man. Well, I went to a horse-dealer's, where I saw this magnificent horse, which I have named Medea. I asked the price of it; they told me it was four thousand five hundred livres. I was therefore obliged to give it up, as you may imagine; but I own I went away with a heavy heart, for the horse had looked at me affectionately, had rubbed its head against me, and when I mounted it, had pranced in the most coquettish way imaginable. The same evening some friends of mine visited me,—M. de Château-Renaud, M. Debray, and five or six other choice spirits whom you do not know even by name. They proposed *la bouillotte*. I never play, for I am not rich enough to afford to lose, nor sufficiently poor to desire to gain. But I was at my own house, you understand; so there was nothing to be done but to send for the cards, which I did Just as they were sitting down to table, M. de Monte Cristo arrived. He took his seat among them; they played and I won.

I am almost ashamed to say that my gains amounted to five thousand livres. We separated at midnight. I could not defer my pleasure, so I took a cabriolet and drove to the horse-dealer's. Feverish and excited, I rang at the door. The person who opened it must have taken me for a madman, for I rushed at once to the stable. Medea was standing at the rack, eating her hay. I immediately put on the saddle and bridle, to which operation she lent herself with the best grace possible; then putting the four thousand five hundred livres into the hands of the astonished dealer, I proceeded to fulfil my intention of passing the night in riding in the Champs Elysées. As I rode by the count's house I perceived a light in one of the windows, and fancied I saw the shadow of his figure moving behind the curtain. Now, Valentine, I firmly believe that he knew of my wish to possess this horse, and that he lost expressly to give me the means of procuring it."

"My dear Maximilian, you are really too fanciful; you will not love me long. A man who accustoms himself to live in such a world of poetry and imagination must find far too little excitement in a common, every-day sort of attachment such as ours. But they are calling me. Do you hear?"

"Ah, Valentine!" said Maximilian, "give me but one finger through this opening in the grating, that I may have the happiness of kissing it."

"Maximilian, we said we would be to each other as two voices, two shadows."

"As you will, Valentine."

"Shall you be happy if I do what you wish?"

"Oh, yes!"

Valentine mounted the bank and passed not only her finger but her whole hand through the opening. Maximilian uttered a cry of delight, and springing forward, seized the hand extended towards him, and imprinted on it a fervent and impassioned kiss. The little hand was then immediately withdrawn, and the young man saw Valentine hurrying towards the house, as though she were almost terrified at her own sensations.

CHAPTER LVIII

MONSIEUR NOIRTIER DE VILLEFORT

We will now relate what was passing in the house of the *procureur du roi* after the departure of Madame Danglars and her daughter, and during the time of the conversation between

Maximilian and Valentine which we have just detailed. M. de Villefort entered his father's room, followed by Madame de Villefort. Both of the visitors, after saluting the old man and speaking to Barrois,—a faithful servant who had been twenty-five years in his service,—took their places on either side of the paralytic.

M. Noirtier was sitting in an armchair, which moved upon castors, in which he was wheeled into the room in the morning, and in the same way drawn out again at night. He was placed before a large glass which reflected the whole apartment, and permitted him to see without any attempt to move, which would have been impossible, all who entered the room and everything which was going on around him. M. Noirtier, immovable as a corpse, looked at the new-comers with a quick and intelligent expression, perceiving at once by their ceremonious courtesy, that they were come on business of an unexpected and official character. Sight and hearing were the only senses remaining, and they appeared left, like two solitary sparks, to animate the miserable body which seemed fit for nothing but the grave; it was only, however, by means of one of these senses that he could reveal the thoughts and feelings which still worked in his mind, and the look by which he gave expression to this inner life resembled one of those distant lights which are sometimes seen in perspective by the benighted traveller while crossing some cheerless desert, apprising him that there is still another human being who is awake in that silence and darkness. Noirtier's hair was long and white, and flowed over his shoulders, while in his eyes, shaded by thick, black lashes, were concentrated, as it often happens with any organ which is used to the exclusion of the others, all the activity, address, force, and intelligence which were formerly diffused over his whole body. Certainly the movement of the arm, the sound of the voice, and the agility of the body were wanting; but that powerful eye sufficed for all. He commanded with his eyes; he expressed gratitude with his eyes, —in short, his whole appearance produced on the mind the impression of a corpse with living eyes; and nothing could be more startling than to observe that face of marble lighted by a flash of anger or a gleam of delight.

Three persons only could understand this language of the poor paralytic; these were Villefort, Valentine, and the old servant of whom we have already spoken. But as Villefort saw his father but seldom, and then only when absolutely obliged, and as when with him he never tried to give him pleasure by understanding him, all the old man's happiness was centred in his

grand-daughter. Valentine, through her love, her patience, and her devotion, had learned to read in Noirtier's look all the varied feelings which were passing in his mind. To this dumb language, which was so unintelligible to others, she answered with all the tones of her voice, with all the expressions of her countenance, and with all the earnestness of her soul; so that animated conversations were sustained between the young girl and the helpless invalid, whose body could scarcely be called a living one, but who nevertheless was still a man of immense knowledge, of wonderful penetration, and a will as powerful as is still possible where the soul is shut up in matter which it can no longer command. Valentine had resolved this strange problem, and was able easily to understand his thoughts and to convey her own in return; and by her untiring and devoted assiduity, it was seldom that in the ordinary transactions of every-day life she failed to apprehend the wishes of the living, thinking mind, or the wants of the almost inanimate body. As to the servant, he had, as we have said, been with his master for five-and-twenty years; therefore he knew all his habits, and it was seldom that Noirtier found it necessary to ask for anything.

Villefort did not need the help of either Valentine or the domestic in order to carry on with his father the strange conversation which he was about to begin. As we have said, he perfectly understood the old man's vocabulary; and if he did not use it more often it was only indifference and *ennui* which prevented him from so doing. He therefore allowed Valentine to go into the garden, sent away Barrois, and after having taken a place on the right hand of his father, while Madame de Villefort seated herself on the left, he addressed him thus:—

"I trust you will not be displeased, monsieur, that Valentine has not come with us, or that I dismissed Barrois, for our conference will be one which could not with propriety be carried on in the presence of either; Madame de Villefort and I have a communication to make to you."

Noirtier's face remained perfectly passive during this long preamble; while on the contrary the eye of Villefort was endeavouring to penetrate into the inmost recesses of the old man's heart.

"This communication," continued the *procureur du roi*, in that cold and decisive tone which seemed at once to preclude all discussion, "will, we are sure, meet with your approbation."

The eye of the invalid still retained that vacancy of expression which prevented his son from obtaining any knowledge of the

feelings which were passing in his mind; he listened,—nothing more.

"Monsieur," resumed Villefort, "we are thinking of marrying Valentine."

Had the old man's face been moulded in wax, it could not have shown less emotion at this news than was now to be traced there.

"The marriage will take place in less than three months," said Villefort.

Noirtier's eye still retained its inanimate expression. Madame de Villefort now took her part in the conversation and added,—

"We thought this news would possess an interest for you, monsieur, who have always entertained a great affection for Valentine; it therefore only now remains for us to tell you the name of the young man for whom she is destined. It is one of the most desirable connections to which Valentine could aspire; he possesses fortune, a high rank in society, and personal qualifications which afford a guarantee for her happiness. His name, however, cannot be wholly unknown to you. The person to whom we allude is M. Franz de Quesnel, Baron d'Epinay."

During the time that his wife was speaking Villefort had narrowly watched the countenance of the old man. When Madame de Villefort pronounced the name of Franz, the pupil of M. Noirtier's eye began to dilate, and his eyelids trembled with the same movement as may be perceived on the lips of an individual about to speak, and he darted a lightning glance at Madame de Villefort and his son. The *procureur du roi*, who knew the political hatred which had formerly existed between M. Noirtier and the elder D'Epinay, well understood the agitation and anger which the announcement had produced; but feigning not to perceive either, he took up the conversation where his wife had ended.

"Monsieur," said he, "you are aware that Valentine is about to enter her nineteenth year, which renders it important that she should lose no time in forming a suitable connection. Nevertheless, you have not been forgotten in our plans, and we have fully ascertained beforehand that Valentine's future husband will consent, not to live in this house, for that might not be pleasant for the young people, but that you should live with them; so that you and Valentine, who are so attached to each other, would not be separated, your habits would not be deranged, and you would have two children instead of one to take care of you."

Noirtier's look was furious; it was very evident that something desperate was passing in the old man's mind,—for the

cry of anger and grief rose to his throat, and not being able to find vent in utterance, appeared almost to choke him, for his face and lips turned quite purple with the struggle. Villefort quietly opened a window, saying, "It is very warm, and the heat affects M. Noirtier." He then returned to his place, but did not sit down.

"This marriage," added Madame de Villefort, "is quite agreeable to the wishes of M. d'Epinay and his family; besides, he has no relations nearer than an uncle and aunt, his mother having died at his birth, and his father having been assassinated in 1815,—that is to say, when he was but two years old. He has therefore only his own will to consider."

"That assassination was a mysterious affair," said Villefort; "and the perpetrators have hitherto escaped detection, although suspicion has fallen on the head of more than one person." Noirtier made such an effort that his lips expanded into a smile. "Now," continued Villefort, "those to whom the guilt really belongs, by whom the crime was committed, on whose heads the justice of man may descend here, and the judgment of God hereafter, would rejoice to be in our place and to have a daughter to offer to M. Franz d'Epinay, and thus to obliterate every suspicious appearance."

Noirtier had succeeded in mastering his emotion more than could have been deemed possible to a person with such an enfeebled and shattered frame. "Yes, I understand," was the reply contained in his look; and this look expressed a feeling of strong indignation mixed with profound contempt. Villefort fully understood his father's meaning, and answered by a slight shrug of his shoulders. He then motioned to his wife to take leave.

"Now, monsieur," said Madame de Villefort, "I must bid you farewell. Would you like me to send Edouard to you for a short time?"

It had been agreed that the old man should express his approbation by closing his eyes, his refusal by winking them several times, and if he had some desire or feeling to express he raised them to heaven. If he wanted Valentine, he closed his right eye only, and if Barrois, the left. At Madame de Villefort's proposition he instantly winked his eyes. Provoked by a complete refusal, she bit her lip and said, "Then shall I send Valentine to you?" The old man closed his eyes eagerly, thereby intimating that such was his wish. Monsieur and Madame de Villefort bowed and left the room, giving orders that Valentine should be summoned. Valentine already had

been notified that she would have special occasion during the day for an interview with M. Noirtier. She entered the room with a colour still heightened by emotion, just after her parents had quitted it. One look was sufficient to tell her that her grandfather was suffering, and that there was much on his mind which he was wishing to communicate to her. " Dear grandpapa," cried she, " what has happened? They have vexed you, and you are angry? "

The paralytic closed his eyes in token of assent.

" Against whom, then? Against my father? no. Against Madame de Villefort? no. Against me? "

The old man gave the sign of assent.

" Against me? " said Valentine, in astonishment.

The old man repeated the sign.

" And what have I done, dear grandpapa, that you should be angry with me? " cried Valentine.

There was no answer; and she continued, " I have not seen you all day. Has any one been speaking to you about me? "

" Yes," said the old man's look, with eagerness.

" Let me think a moment. I do assure you, grandpapa— Ah! Monsieur and Madame de Villefort have just left this room, have they not? "

" Yes."

" And it was they who told you something which made you angry? What was it, then? May I go and ask them, that I may have the opportunity of making my peace with you? "

" No, no! " said Noirtier's look.

" Ah! you frighten me. What can they have said? " and she again tried to think what it could be.

" Ah! I know," said she, lowering her voice and going close to the old man; " they have been speaking of my marriage,— have they not? "

" Yes," replied the angry look.

" I understand; you are displeased at the silence I have preserved on the subject. The reason of it was that they had insisted on my keeping the matter a secret, and begged me not to tell you anything about it; they did not even acquaint me with their intentions, and I only discovered them by chance,— that is why I have been so reserved with you, dear grandpapa. Pray forgive me."

But there was no look calculated to reassure her; all it seemed to say was, " It is not only your reserve which afflicts me."

" What is it then? " asked the young girl. " Perhaps you

think I shall abandon you, dear grandpapa, and that I shall forget you when I am married?"

"No."

"They told you, then, that M. d'Epinay consented to our all living together?"

"Yes."

"Then why are you still vexed and grieved?"

The old man's eyes beamed with an expression of gentle affection.

"Yes, I understand," said Valentine; "it is because you love me."

The old man assented.

"And you are afraid I shall be unhappy?"

"Yes."

"You do not like M. Franz?"

The eyes repeated several times, "No, no, no."

"Then you are vexed with the engagement?"

"Yes."

"Well, listen," said Valentine, throwing herself on her knees, and putting her arm round her grandfather's neck; "I am vexed too, for I do not love M. Franz d'Epinay." An expression of intense joy illumined the old man's eyes. "When I wished to retire into a convent, you remember how angry you were with me?" A tear trembled in the eye of the invalid. "Well," continued Valentine, "the reason of my proposing it was that I might escape this hateful marriage, which drives me to despair." Noirtier's breathing became thick and short. "Then the idea of this marriage really grieves you too? Ah, if you could but help me; if we could both together defeat their plan! But you are unable to oppose them; you, whose mind is so quick, and whose will is so firm, are nevertheless as weak and unequal to the contest as I am myself. Alas, you, who would have been such a powerful protector to me in the days of your health and strength, can now only sympathise in my joys and sorrows! It is the last happiness which God has forgotten to take away with all the rest."

At these words there appeared in Noirtier's eye an expression of such deep meaning that the young girl thought she could read these words there, "You are mistaken; I can still do much for you."

"Do you think you can help me, dear grandpapa?" said Valentine.

"Yes." Noirtier raised his eyes; it was the sign agreed on between him and Valentine when he wanted anything.

"What is it you want, dear grandpapa?" said Valentine; and she endeavoured to recall to mind all the things which he would be likely to need. And as the ideas presented themselves to her mind, she repeated them aloud; but finding that all her efforts elicited nothing but a constant "No," "Come," said she, "the grand resort, since I am so foolish." She then recited all the letters of the alphabet from A down to N, questioning with her smile the eye of the paralytic. At N, Noirtier made an affirmative sign.

"Ah," said Valentine, "the thing you desire begins with the letter N; it is with N that we have to do, then. Well, let me see, what can you want which begins with N? Na—Ne—Ni—No—"

"Yes, yes, yes," said the old man's eye.

"Ah, it is No, then?"

"Yes." Valentine brought a dictionary, which she placed on a desk before Noirtier; she opened it, and seeing that the old man's eye was thoroughly fixed on its pages, she ran her finger quickly up and down the columns. During the six years which had passed since Noirtier first fell into this sad state, Valentine's powers of invention had been too often put to the test not to render her expert in devising expedients for gaining a knowledge of his wishes; and the constant practice had so perfected her in the art that she guessed the old man's meaning as quickly as if he himself had been able to seek for what he wanted. At the word "notary," Noirtier made a sign to her to stop. "Notary," said she; "do you want a notary, dear grandpapa?" The old man again signified that it was a notary he desired.

"You wish a notary to be sent for, then?" said Valentine.

"Yes."

"Shall my father be informed of your wish?"

"Yes."

"Do you wish the notary to be sent for immediately?"

"Yes."

"Then they shall go for him directly, dear grandpapa. Is that all you want?"

"Yes."

Valentine rang the bell and ordered the servant to tell Monsieur or Madame de Villefort that they were requested to come to M. Noirtier's room.

"Are you satisfied?" said Valentine. "Yes? I am sure you are. Eh? it wasn't easy to discover that, was it?" and the young girl smiled on her grandfather as if he had been a child.

M. de Villefort entered, followed by Barrois. "What do you want me for, monsieur?" demanded he of the paralytic.

"Monsieur," said Valentine, "my grandfather wishes for a notary."

At this strange and unexpected demand M. de Villefort and his father exchanged looks. "Yes," signified the latter, with a firmness which indicated that with the help of Valentine and his old servant, who both knew what his wishes were, he was quite prepared to maintain the contest.

"Do you wish for a notary?" asked Villefort.

"Yes."

"What to do?"

Noirtier made no answer.

"What do you want with a notary?" repeated Villefort.

The invalid's eye remained fixed, by which expression he intended to intimate that his resolution was unalterable.

"Is it to do us some ill turn? Do you think it is worth while?" said Villefort.

"Still," said Barrois, prepared to insist with the freedom and fidelity of an old servant, "if M. Noirtier asks for a notary, I suppose he really wishes for a notary; therefore I shall go at once and fetch one." Barrois acknowledged no master but Noirtier, and never allowed his desires in any way to be contradicted.

"Yes, I want a notary," intimated the old man, shutting his eyes with a look of defiance, which seemed to say, "and I should like to see the person who dares to refuse my request."

"You shall have a notary as you absolutely wish for one, monsieur," said Villefort; "but I shall explain to him your state of health and make excuses for you, for the scene will be ridiculous."

"Never mind that," said Barrois; "I shall go and fetch a notary, nevertheless;" and the old servant departed triumphantly on his mission.

CHAPTER LIX

THE WILL

As soon as Barrois had left the room, Noirtier looked at Valentine with that peculiar expression which conveyed so much deep meaning. The young girl perfectly understood the look, and so did Villefort, for his countenance became clouded, and

he knitted his eyebrows angrily. He took a seat and quietly awaited the arrival of the notary. Noirtier saw him seat himself with an appearance of perfect indifference, at the same time giving a side look at Valentine, which made her understand that she also was to remain in the room. Three-quarters of an hour after, Barrois returned, bringing the notary with him.

"Monsieur," said Villefort, after the first salutations were over, "you were sent for by M. Noirtier, whom you see here. All his limbs have become completely paralysed; he has lost his voice also, and we ourselves find much trouble in endeavouring to catch some fragments of his meaning." Noirtier cast an appealing look on Valentine, which look was at once so earnest and imperative that she answered immediately. "Monsieur," said she, "I perfectly understand my grandfather's meaning at all times."

"That is quite true," said Barrois; "and that is what I told the gentleman as we walked along."

"Permit me," said the notary, turning first to Villefort and then to Valentine,—"permit me to state that the case in question is just one of those in which a public officer like myself cannot proceed inconsiderately without thereby incurring a dangerous responsibility. The first thing necessary to render an act valid is that the notary should be thoroughly convinced that he has faithfully interpreted the will of the person dictating. Now, I cannot be sure of the approbation or disapprobation of a client who cannot speak; and as the object of his desire or his repugnance cannot be clearly proved to me, on account of his want of speech, my services here would be quite useless, and cannot be legally exercised."

The notary then prepared to retire. An imperceptible smile of triumph was expressed on the lips of the *procureur du roi*. Noirtier looked at Valentine with an expression so full of grief that she arrested the departure of the notary. "Monsieur," said she, "the language which I speak with my grandfather may be easily learned; and I can teach you in a few minutes to understand it almost as well as I can myself. Will you tell me what you require in order to set your conscience quite at ease on the subject?"

"In order to render an act valid I must be certain of the approbation or disapprobation of my client. Illness of the body would not affect the validity of the deed; but sanity of mind is absolutely requisite."

"Well, monsieur, by the help of two signs you may ascertain with perfect certainty that my grandfather is still in the full

possession of all his mental faculties. M. Nortier, being deprived of voice and motion, is accustomed to convey his meaning by closing his eyes when he wishes to signify 'yes,' and to wink when he means 'no.' You now know quite enough to enable you to converse with M. Noirtier; try."

Noirtier gave Valentine such a look of tenderness and gratitude that it was comprehended even by the notary himself. "You have heard and understood what your grand-daughter has been saying, monsieur?" asked the notary. Noirtier closed his eyes. "And you approve of what she said,—that is to say, you declare that the signs which she mentioned are really those by means of which you are accustomed to convey your thoughts?"

"Yes."

"It was you who sent for me?"

"Yes."

"To make your will?"

"Yes."

"And you do not wish me to go away without fulfilling your original intentions?" The old man winked violently.

"Well, monsieur," said the young girl, "do you understand now, and is your conscience perfectly at rest on the subject?"

But before the notary could answer, Villefort had drawn him aside.

"Monsieur," said he, "do you suppose for a moment that a man can sustain a physical shock such as M. Noirtier has received, without any detriment to his mental faculties?"

"It is not exactly that, sir," said the notary, "which makes me uneasy; but the difficulty will be to divine his thoughts so as to be able to elicit answers."

"You must see that to be an utter impossibility," said Villefort.

Valentine and the old man heard this conversation; and Noirtier fixed his eye so earnestly on Valentine that she felt bound to make reply.

"Monsieur," said she, "that need not make you uneasy, however difficult it may at first sight appear to be. I can discover and explain to you my grandfather's thoughts so as to put an end to all your doubts and fears on the subject. I have now been six years with M. Noirtier; and let him tell you if ever once during that time he has entertained a thought which he was unable to make me understand."

"No," signed the old man.

"Let us try what we can do, then," said the notary. "You accept this young lady as your interpreter, M. Noirtier?"

The paralytic made an affirmative sign.

"Well, sir, what do you require of me, and what document is it that you wish to be drawn up?"

Valentine named all the letters of the alphabet until she came to T. At this letter the eloquent eye of Noirtier gave her notice that she was to stop.

"It is very evident that it is the letter T which M. Noirtier wants," said the notary.

"Wait," said Valentine; and turning to her grandfather she repeated, "Ta—Te."

The old man stopped her at the second of these syllables. Valentine then took the dictionary, and the notary watched her while she turned over the pages. She passed her finger slowly down the columns, and when she came to the word "testament," M. Noirtier's eye bade her stop. "Testament!" cried the notary; "it is very evident that M. Noirtier wishes to make his will."

"Yes, yes, yes!" motioned the invalid.

"Really, monsieur, you must allow that this is most extraordinary," said the astonished notary, turning to M. de Villefort.

"Yes," said the *procureur*, "and I think the will promises to be yet more extraordinary; for I cannot see how it is to be drawn up without the intervention of Valentine, and she may perhaps be considered as too much interested in its contents to allow of her being a suitable interpreter of the obscure and ill-defined wishes of her grandfather."

"No, no, no!" replied the eye of the paralytic.

"What!" said Villefort, "Valentine is not interested in your will?"

"No."

"Monsieur," said the notary, whose interest had been greatly excited, and who had resolved on publishing far and wide the account of this extraordinary and picturesque scene, "what appeared so impossible to me an hour ago, has now become quite easy and practicable; and this may be a perfectly valid will, provided it be read in the presence of seven witnesses, approved by the testator, and sealed by the notary in the presence of the witnesses. As to the time, it will certainly occupy rather more than ordinary wills. There are certain forms necessary to be gone through, and which are always the same. As to the details, the greater part will be afforded by the state in which we find the affairs of the testator, and by yourself, who, having had the management of them, can doubtless give full information on the subject. But besides all this,

in order that the instrument may be incontestable, we will give it the greatest possible authenticity; therefore one of my colleagues will help me, and contrary to custom will assist in the dictation of the testament. Are you satisfied, monsieur?" continued the notary, addressing the old man.

"Yes," looked the invalid, delighted at being understood.

"What is he going to do?" thought Villefort, whose position demanded so much reserve, but who was longing to know what were the intentions of his father. He left the room to give orders for another notary to be sent for; but Barrois, who had heard all that passed, had guessed his master's wishes, and had already set out. The *procureur du roi* then told his wife to come up. In the course of a quarter of an hour every one had assembled in the chamber of the paralytic; the second notary had also arrived. A few words sufficed for a mutual understanding between the two officers of the law. They read to Noirtier the formal copy of a will, in order to give him an idea of the terms in which such documents are generally couched; then in order to test the capacity of the testator, the first notary said, turning towards him, "When a man makes his will, it is generally in favour or in prejudice of some person."

"Yes," intimated Noirtier.

"Have you an exact idea of the amount of your fortune?"

"Yes."

"I will name to you several sums which will increase by gradation; you will stop me when I reach the one representing the amount of your own possessions?"

"Yes."

There was a kind of solemnity in this interrogation. Never had the struggle between mind and matter been more apparent than now; and if it was not a sublime, it was at least a curious spectacle. They had formed a circle round the invalid; the second notary was sitting at a table, prepared for writing, and his colleague was standing before the testator in the act of interrogating him on the subject to which we have alluded. "Your fortune exceeds three hundred thousand livres, does it not?" asked he. Noirtier made a sign that it did. "Do you possess four hundred thousand livres?" inquired the notary. Noirtier's eye remained immovable. "Five hundred thousand?" The same expression continued. "Six hundred thousand; seven hundred thousand; eight hundred thousand; nine hundred thousand?" Noirtier stopped him at the last-named sum.

"You are then in possession of nine hundred thousand livres?" asked the notary.

"Yes."

"In landed property?"

"No."

"In stock?"

"Yes."

"The stock is in your own hands?"

The look which M. Noirtier cast on Barrois showed that there was something wanting which he knew where to find; the old servant left the room, and presently returned, bringing with him a small casket.

"Do you permit us to open this casket?" asked the notary. Noirtier gave his assent. They opened it, and found nine hundred thousand livres in bank script. The first notary handed over each note, as he examined it, to his colleague. The total amount was found to be as M. Noirtier had stated.

"It is all as he has said," observed the first notary; "it is very evident that the mind still retains its full force and vigour." Then turning towards the paralytic, he said, "You possess, then, nine hundred thousand livres of capital, which according to the manner in which you have invested it ought to bring in an income of about forty thousand livres?"

"Yes."

"To whom do you desire to leave this fortune?"

"Oh!" said Madame de Villefort, "there is not much doubt on that subject. M. Noirtier tenderly loves his grand-daughter, Mademoiselle de Villefort; she has nursed and tended him for six years, and has by her devoted attention fully secured the affection, I had almost said the gratitude of her grandfather; and it is but just that she should reap the fruit of her devotion."

The eye of Noirtier clearly showed by its expression that he was not deceived by the false construction given by Madame de Villefort to the motives which she supposed him to entertain.

"Is it, then, to Mademoiselle Valentine de Villefort that you leave these nine hundred thousand livres?" demanded the notary, thinking he had only to insert this clause, but waiting first for the assent of Noirtier, which it was necessary should be given before all the witnesses of this singular scene. Valentine, when her name was made the subject of discussion, had stepped back to escape unpleasant observation; her eyes were cast down, and she was crying. The old man looked at her for an instant with an expression of the deepest tenderness; then turning towards the notary, he significantly winked his eye in token of dissent.

"What!" said the notary, "do you not intend making Mademoiselle Valentine de Villefort your residuary legatee?"

"No."

"You are not making any mistake, are you?" said the notary; "you really mean no?"

"No!" repeated Noirtier; "no!"

Valentine raised her head; she was struck dumb with astonishment. It was not so much the conviction that she was disinherited which caused her grief, but her total inability to account for the feelings which had provoked her grandfather to such an act; but Noirtier looked at her with so much affectionate tenderness that she exclaimed, "Oh, grandpapa! I see now that it is only your fortune of which you deprive me; you still leave me the love which I have always enjoyed."

"Ah, yes, most assuredly!" said the eyes of the paralytic; for he closed them with an expression which Valentine could not mistake."

"Thank you! thank you!" she murmured.

The old man's declaration that Valentine was not the destined inheritor of his fortune had excited the hopes of Madame de Villefort; she approached the invalid and said, "Then doubtless, dear M. Noirtier, you intend leaving your fortune to your grandson, Edouard de Villefort?"

The winking of the eyes which answered this speech was most decided and terrible, and expressed a feeling almost amounting to hatred.

"No," said the notary; "then perhaps it is to your son, M. de Villefort?"

"No," replied the old man.

The two notaries looked at each other in mute astonishment. Villefort and his wife both blushed and changed colour, one from shame, the other from anger.

"What have we all done, then, dear grandpapa?" said Valentine; "you no longer seem to love any of us." The old man's eye passed rapidly from Villefort and his wife, and rested on Valentine with a look of unutterable fondness. "Well," said she, "if you love me, grandpapa, try to conform to that love your actions at this present moment. You know me well enough to be quite sure that I have never thought of your fortune; besides, they say I am already rich in right of my mother,—too rich, even. Explain yourself, then."

Noirtier fixed his intelligent eyes on Valentine's hand.

"My hand?" said she.

"Yes."

"Her hand!" exclaimed every one.

"Oh, gentlemen! you see it is all useless, and that my father's mind is really impaired," said Villefort.

"Ah!" cried Valentine, suddenly, "I understand! it is my marriage you mean, is it not, dear grandpapa?"

"Yes, yes, yes," signed the paralytic, casting on Valentine a look of joyful gratitude for having divined his meaning.

"You are angry with us all on account of this marriage, are you not?"

"Yes."

"Really, this is too absurd," said Villefort.

"Excuse me, monsieur," replied the notary; "on the contrary, M. Noirtier's meaning is quite evident to me, and I can quite easily connect the train of ideas passing in his mind."

"You do not wish me to marry M. Franz d'Epinay?" observed Valentine.

"I do not wish it," said the eye of her grandfather.

"And you disinherit your grand-daughter," continued the notary, "because she has contracted an engagement contrary to your wishes?"

"Yes."

"So that but for this marriage, she would have been your heir?"

"Yes."

There was a profound silence. The two notaries were holding a consultation; Valentine, clasping her hands, was looking at her grandfather with a smile of gratitude; Villefort was biting his lips with vexation; Madame de Villefort could not repress an inward feeling of joy, which in spite of herself appeared in her whole countenance.

"But," said Villefort, who was the first to break the silence, "I consider that I am the best judge of the propriety of the marriage in question. I am the only person possessing the right to dispose of my daughter's hand. It is my wish that she should marry M. Franz d'Epinay, and she shall marry him!"

Valentine sank weeping into a chair.

"Sir," said the notary, "how do you intend disposing of your fortune in case Mademoiselle de Villefort still determines on marrying M. Franz?"

The old man gave no answer.

"You will of course dispose of it in some way?"

"Yes."

"In favour of some member of your family?"

"No."

"Do you intend devoting it to charitable purposes, then?" pursued the notary.

"Yes."

"But," said the notary, "you are aware that the law does not allow a son to be entirely deprived of his patrimony?"

"Yes."

"You intend, then, to dispose of only that part of your fortune which the law allows you to alienate?"

Noirtier made no answer.

"Do you still wish to dispose of all?"

"Yes."

"But they will contest the will after your death."

"No."

"My father knows me," replied Villefort; "he is quite sure that his wishes will be held sacred by me. Besides, he understands that in my position I cannot plead against the poor."

The eye of Noirtier beamed with triumph.

"What do you decide on, monsieur?" asked the notary of Villefort.

"Nothing, monsieur. It is a resolution which my father has taken; and I know he never alters his mind. I am quite resigned. These nine hundred thousand livres will go out of the family to enrich some hospital; but I will not yield to the caprices of an old man. I shall act according to my conscience."

Having said this, Villefort quitted the room with his wife, leaving his father at liberty to do as he pleased. The same day the will was made, the witnesses were brought, it was approved by the old man, sealed in the presence of all, and given in charge of M. Deschamps, the family notary.

CHAPTER LX

THE TELEGRAPH

Monsieur and Madame de Villefort found on their return that the Count of Monte Cristo, who had come to visit them in their absence, had been ushered into the drawing-room and was still awaiting them there. Madame de Villefort, who was too excited to appear so soon before visitors, retired to her bedroom, while the *procureur du roi*, who could better depend upon himself, proceeded at once to the drawing-room. But whatever his mastery over his emotions, and however he controlled the expression of his face, he could not so entirely banish the cloud

from his brow but that the count, who approached him with a radiant smile, was struck by his gloomy and thoughtful manner.

"Good heavens!" said Monte Cristo, after the first compliments were over, "what is the matter with you, M. de Villefort? Have I arrived at the moment that you were drawing up some capital indictment?"

Villefort tried to smile. "No, Monsieur the Count," he replied, "I am the only victim in this case. It is I who lose my cause; and it is ill-luck, obstinacy, and folly which have decided it against me."

"To what do you allude?" said Monte Cristo, with well-feigned interest. "Have you really met with some great misfortune?"

"Oh! Monsieur the Count," said Villefort, with a bitter smile, "it is only a loss of money which I have sustained,—nothing worth mentioning, I assure you."

"True," said Monte Cristo, "the loss of money becomes almost immaterial with a fortune such as you possess, and a mind philosophical and elevated like your own."

"It is not so much the loss of the money which vexes me," said Villefort, "though, after all, nine hundred thousand livres are worth regretting; but I am the more annoyed with this fate, chance, or whatever you please to call the power which has destroyed my hopes and my fortune, and may blast the prospects of my child also, as it is all occasioned by an old man relapsed into second childhood."

"What do you say!" said the count; "nine hundred thousand livres? it is indeed a sum to be regretted, even by a philosopher. And who is the cause of all this annoyance?"

"My father, of whom I have spoken to you."

"M. Noirtier! but I thought you told me he had become entirely paralysed, and that all his faculties were completely destroyed?"

"Yes, his bodily faculties, for he can neither move nor speak; nevertheless, he thinks, acts, and wills, as you see. I left him about five minutes ago, and he is now occupied in dictating his will to two notaries."

"But to do this he must have spoken?"

"He has done better than that,—he has made himself understood."

"How was such a thing possible?"

"By the help of his eyes, which are still full of life, and as you perceive, possess the power of inflicting mortal injury."

"My dear," said Madame de Villefort, who had just entered the room, "perhaps you exaggerate the evil."

"Good-morning, madame!" said the count, bowing.

Madame de Villefort acknowledged the salutation with her most gracious smile.

"What is this that M. de Villefort has been telling me?" demanded Monte Cristo, "and what incomprehensible misfortune—"

"Incomprehensible is the word!" interrupted the *procureur du roi*, shrugging his shoulders; "an old man's caprice."

"And is there no way to make him revoke his decision?"

"Yes," said Madame de Villefort; "and it is still entirely in the power of my husband to cause the will, which is now in prejudice of Valentine, to be altered in her favour."

The count, who perceived that Monsieur and Madame de Villefort were beginning to speak in parables, appeared to pay no attention to the conversation, and feigned to be busily engaged in watching Edouard, who was mischievously pouring some ink into the bird's water-glass.

"My dear," said Villefort, in answer to his wife, "you know I have never been accustomed to play the patriarch in my family; nor have I ever considered that the fate of a universe was to be decided by my nod. Nevertheless, it is necessary that my will should be respected in my family, and that the folly of an old man and the caprice of a child should not be allowed to overturn a project which I have entertained for so many years. The Baron d'Epinay was my friend, as you know, and an alliance with his son is the most suitable thing that could possibly be arranged."

"Do you think," said Madame de Villefort, "that Valentine is in league with him? She has always been opposed to this marriage; and I should not be at all surprised if what we have just seen and heard is nothing but the execution of a plan concerted between them."

"Madame," said Villefort, "believe me, a fortune of nine hundred thousand livres is not so easily renounced."

"She could nevertheless make up her mind to renounce the world, monsieur, since it is only about a year ago that she herself proposed entering a convent."

"Never mind," replied Villefort; "I say that this marriage shall be consummated!"

"Notwithstanding your father's wishes to the contrary?" said Madame de Villefort, selecting a new point of attack. "That is a serious thing!"

Monte Cristo, who pretended not to be listening, heard however every word that was said.

"Madame," replied Villefort, "I can truly say that I have always entertained a high respect for my father, because to the natural feeling of relationship was added the consciousness of his moral superiority. The name of father is sacred in two senses,—he should be reverenced as the author of our being, and as a master whom we ought to obey; but under the present circumstances, I am justified in doubting the wisdom of an old man who because he hated the father vents his anger on the son; it would be ridiculous in me to regulate my conduct by such caprices. I shall still continue to preserve the same respect towards M. Noirtier. I will suffer without complaint the pecuniary deprivation to which he has subjected me; but I will remain firm in my determination, and the world shall see which party has reason on his side. Consequently I shall marry my daughter to the Baron Franz d'Epinay, because I consider it would be a proper and eligible match for her to make, and in short, because I choose to bestow my daughter's hand on whomsoever I please."

"What!" said the count, the approbation of whose eye Villefort had frequently solicited during this speech. "What! do you say that M. Noirtier disinherits Mademoiselle de Villefort because she is going to marry M. le Baron Franz d'Epinay?"

"Yes, monsieur, that is the reason," said Villefort, shrugging his shoulders.

"The apparent reason, at least," said Madame de Villefort.

"The real reason, madame, I can assure you; I know my father."

"It is inconceivable," said the young woman. "But I want to know in what way M. d'Epinay can have displeased your father more than any other person?"

"I believe I know M. Franz d'Epinay," said the count; "is he not the son of General de Quesnel, who was created Baron d'Epinay by Charles X.?"

"The same," said Villefort.

"Well; but he is a charming young man according to my ideas."

"He is, which makes me believe that it is only an excuse of M. Noirtier's to prevent his grand-daughter from marrying; old men are always so selfish in their affection," said Madame de Villefort.

"But," said Monte Cristo, "do you not know any cause for this hatred?"

"Ah, *mon Dieu!* who can tell?"

"Perhaps it is some political difference?"

"My father and the Baron d'Epinay lived in those stormy times of which I saw only the last few days," said Villefort.

"Was not your father a Bonapartist?" asked Monte Cristo; "I think I remember that you told me something of that kind."

"My father has been a Jacobin more than anything else," said Villefort, carried by his emotion beyond the bounds of prudence; "and the senator's robe which Napoleon cast on his shoulders only served to disguise the old man without in any degree changing him. When my father conspired, it was not for the emperor, it was against the Bourbons; for M. Noirtier possessed this peculiarity,—he never projected any Utopian schemes which could not be realised, but strove for possibilities; and he applied to the realisation of these possibilities the terrible theories of the Montagnards, who never recoiled from any course of action."

"Well," said Monte Cristo, "it is just as I thought; it was politics which brought Noirtier and M. d'Epinay into personal contact. Although General d'Epinay served under Napoleon, did he not still retain Royalist sentiments? And was he not the person who was assassinated one evening on leaving a Bonapartist meeting to which he had been invited on the supposition of his favouring the cause of the emperor?"

Villefort looked at the count almost with terror.

"Am I mistaken, then?" said Monte Cristo.

"No, monsieur, the facts were precisely what you have stated," said Madame de Villefort; "and it was to prevent the renewal of old feuds that M. de Villefort formed the idea of uniting in the bonds of affection the two children of these inveterate enemies."

"It was a sublime and charitable thought," said Monte Cristo; "and the whole world should applaud it. It would be fine to see Mademoiselle Noirtier de Villefort assuming the title of Madame Franz d'Epinay."

Villefort shuddered and looked at Monte Cristo as if he wished to read in his countenance the real feelings which had dictated the words he had just pronounced. But the count completely baffled the penetration of the *procureur du roi*, and prevented him from discovering anything beneath his habitual smile.

"Although," said Villefort, "it will be a serious thing for Valentine to lose the fortune of her grandfather, I do not think the marriage will be prevented on that account. I do not believe that M. d'Epinay will be frightened at this pecuniary

loss. He will see that I am worth perhaps more than that amount, which I will sacrifice to the keeping of my word. Besides, he knows that Valentine is rich in right of her mother, and that she will in all probability inherit the fortune of Monsieur and Madame de Saint-Méran, her mother's parents, who both love her tenderly."

"And who deserve to be loved and cared for as Valentine has loved and cared for M. Noirtier," said Madame de Villefort. "Besides, they are to come to Paris in about a month; and Valentine, after the affront she has received, need not consider it necessary to continue to bury herself alive by being shut up with M. Noirtier."

The count listend with satisfaction to this tale of wounded self-love and defeated ambition. "But it seems to me," said he,—"and I must begin by asking your pardon for what I am about to say,—that if M. Noirtier disinherits Mademoiselle de Villefort on account of her marrying a man whose father he detested, he cannot have the same cause of complaint against that dear Edouard."

"True," said Madame de Villefort, with an intonation of voice which it is impossible to describe; "is it not unjust,—shamefully unjust? Poor Edouard is as much M. Noirtier's grandchild as Valentine, and yet if she had not been going to marry M. Franz, M. Noirtier would have left her all his money; and moreover, though Edouard bears the family name, Valentine will still be three times richer than he, even after being disinherited by her grandfather."

That stroke having succeeded, the count listened and said no more.

"Monsieur the Count," said Villefort, "we will not entertain you any longer with our family misfortunes. It is true that my patrimony will go to endow charitable institutions, and my father will have deprived me of my lawful inheritance without any reason for doing so; but I shall have the satisfaction of knowing that I have acted like a man of sense and feeling. M. d'Epinay, to whom I had promised the interest of this sum, shall receive it, even if I have to impose on myself the most cruel privations."

"However," said Madame de Villefort, returning to the one idea which incessantly occupied her mind, "perhaps it would be better to represent this unlucky affair to M. d'Epinay, in order to give him the opportunity of himself renouncing his claim to the hand of Mademoiselle de Villefort."

"Ah, that would be a great pity!" said Villefort.

"A great pity!" said Monte Cristo.

"Undoubtedly," said Villefort, moderating the tones of his voice; "a marriage, once concerted and then broken off, throws a sort of discredit on a young lady. Then, again, the old reports, which I was so anxious to put an end to, will instantly gain ground,—no, there will be nothing of the kind. M. d'Epinay, if he is an honourable man, will consider himself more than ever pledged to Mademoiselle de Villefort,—unless he were actuated by a decided feeling of avarice; but that is impossible."

"I agree with M. de Villefort," said Monte Cristo, fixing his eyes on Madame de Villefort; "and if I were sufficiently intimate with him to offer him advice, I would persuade him, since, as I have been told, M. d'Epinay is coming back, to settle this affair at once beyond all possibility of revocation. I will answer for the success of a project which will reflect so much honour on M. de Villefort."

The *procureur du roi* rose, delighted with the proposition; but his wife slightly changed colour. "Well, that is all that I wanted, and I will be guided by a counsellor such as you are," said he, extending his hand to Monte Cristo. "Therefore let every one here look upon what has happened to-day as if it had not happened; there is no change in our plans."

"Sir," said the count, "the world, unjust as it is, will be pleased with your resolution; your friends will be proud of you, and M. d'Epinay, even if he took Mademoiselle de Villefort without any dowry, which he will not do, would be delighted with the idea of entering a family which could make such sacrifices in order to keep a promise and fulfil a duty." At the conclusion of these words, the count rose to depart.

"Are you going to leave us, Monsieur the Count?" said Madame de Villefort.

"I am sorry to say I must do so, madame; I came only to remind you of your promise for Saturday."

"Did you fear that we should forget it?"

"You are very good, madame; but M. de Villefort has so many and sometimes so urgent occupations."

"My husband has given his word, monsieur," said Madame de Villefort. "You see that he keeps it when he has everything to lose; he will keep it by a stronger inducement when he has everything to gain by doing so."

"And," said Villefort, "is it at your house in the Champs Elysées that you receive your visitors?"

"No," said Monte Cristo, "and that makes your kindness greater; it is in the country."

"In the country?"

"Yes."

"Where is it, then? Near Paris, is it not?"

"Very near; only half a league from the barriers,—it is at Auteuil."

"At Auteuil?" said Villefort. "True, madame told me you lived at Auteuil, since it was to your house that she was taken. And in what part of Auteuil do you reside?"

"Rue de la Fontaine."

"Rue de la Fontaine!" exclaimed Villefort, in an agitated tone; "at what number?"

"No. 28."

"Ah!" cried Villefort, "it is you, then, who have bought M. de Saint-Méran's house?"

"Did it belong to M. de Saint-Méran?" demanded Monte Cristo.

"Yes," replied Madame de Villefort; "and, would you believe it, Monsieur the Count—"

"Believe what?"

"You think that house is attractive, do you not?"

"I think it charming."

"Well; my husband would never live in it."

"Indeed!" returned Monte Cristo; "that is a prejudice on your part, monsieur, for which I am quite at a loss to account."

"I do not like Auteuil, monsieur," said the *procureur du roi*, making an effort to control himself.

"But I hope you will not carry your antipathy so far as to deprive me of the pleasure of your company, monsieur," said Monte Cristo.

"No, Monsieur the Count—I hope—I assure you I will do all I can," stammered Villefort.

"Oh," said Monte Cristo, "I admit no excuse. On Saturday, at six o'clock, I shall be expecting you; and if you fail to come, I shall think—for how do I know to the contrary?—that this house, which has remained uninhabited for twenty years, must have some gloomy tradition or dreadful legend connected with it."

"I will come, Monsieur the Count, I will be sure to come!" said Villefort, eagerly.

"Thank you," said Monte Cristo; "now you must permit me to take my leave of you."

"Ah, yes; you said you were compelled to leave us, Monsieur the Count," said Madame de Villefort, "and, I think, were on

the point of telling us for what purpose, when you were interrupted by something else."

"Indeed, madame," said Monte Cristo, "I scarcely know if I dare tell you where I am going."

"Bah! tell me, nevertheless."

"Well, then, I am going—idler that I am—to see a thing on which I have sometimes mused for hours together."

"What is it?"

"A telegraph. So now I have told my secret."

"A telegraph!" repeated Madame de Villefort.

"Yes, a telegraph! I have often seen one placed at the end of a road on a hillock; and in the light of the sun its black arms, bending in every direction, always reminded one of the claws of an immense beetle. And I assure you it was never without emotion that I gazed on it, for I could not help thinking that those queer signals, cleaving the air with precision, to convey to the distance of three hundred leagues the ideas and wishes of a man sitting at a table at one end of the line to another man similarly placed at the opposite extremity, would become visible on the grey background of clouds, or on the blue sky, simply by an act of volition on the part of the all-powerful individual communicating the intelligence. I have thought then of genii, sylphs, gnomes,—in short, of occult forces,—until I laughed aloud at the freaks of my own imagination. Now, it never occurred to me to wish for a nearer inspection of these large insects, with their long black claws, for I always feared to find under their stone wings some little human genius very grave, very pedantic, stuffed with science, mystery, and the black arts. But one fine day I learned that the operator of each telegraph is only a poor devil, hired for twelve hundred livres a year, and employed all the day, not in studying the heavens like an astronomer, nor in gazing on the water like an angler, nor even in enjoying the privilege of observing the country around him, but in watching his fellow-insect, four or five leagues distant from him. So I have become possessed with a curiosity to see in close view this living chrysalis, and to watch the game it plays from the bottom of its shell with that other chrysalis, by pulling, one after the other, some bits of string."

"And are you going there?"

"I am."

"What telegraph station do you intend visiting,—that of the home department or of the Observatory?"

"Oh, no! I should find there people who would force me to

understand things of which I prefer to remain ignorant, and who would try to explain to me in spite of myself a mystery which even they do not understand. No, indeed! I wish to preserve unimpaired my illusions concerning insects; it is quite enough to have those dissipated which I had formed of my fellow-creatures. I shall therefore not visit either the telegraph office of the home department or that of the Observatory. What I want to find is a station in the open country, where I shall have to do with some unsophisticated fellow frozen to his tower."

"You are a singular man," said Villefort.

"What line would you advise me to study?"

"That which is most in use just at this time."

"The Spanish, you mean?"

"Yes; should you like a letter to the minister, that they might explain to you?"

"No," said Monte Cristo; "since, as I told you before, I do not wish to comprehend it. The moment I understand it there will no longer exist a telegraph for me; it will be nothing more than a signal from M. Duchâtel, or from M. Montalivet, transmitted to the prefect of Bayonne, mystified by two Greek words, τῆλε γράφειν I wish to retain all my veneration for the insect with black claws and the terrible name."

"Go, then; for in the course of two hours it will be dark, and you will not be able to see anything."

"The devil! you alarm me! Which is the nearest station?"

"On the road to Bayonne?"

"Yes; the road to Bayonne."

"It is the one at Châtillon."

"And beyond the one at Châtillon?"

"At the tower of Montlhéry, I think."

"Thank you. Good-by. On Saturday I will give you my impressions."

At the door the count was met by the two notaries, who had just completed the act which was to disinherit Valentine, and who were leaving under the conviction of having done a thing which could not fail of redounding considerably to their credit.

CHAPTER LXI

HOW TO GET RID OF DORMICE

NOT on the same evening, as he had said he should, but the next morning, the Count of Monte Cristo went out by the Barrier d'Enfer, taking the road to Orléans. Leaving the village of Linas without stopping at the telegraph station, whence radiated skeleton arms, he reached the tower of Montlhéry, situated, as every one knows, upon the highest point of the plain of that name. At the foot of the hill the count dismounted and began to ascend the mountain by a little winding path, about eighteen inches wide; when he reached the summit he found himself stopped by a hedge, upon which green fruit had succeeded to red and white flowers.

Monte Cristo looked for the door of the enclosure, and was not long in finding it. It was a little wooden gate, working on willow hinges, and fastened with a nail and string. The count soon understood its mechanism; and the door opened. He then found himself in a little garden, about twenty feet long by twelve wide, bounded on one side by part of the hedge in which was formed the ingenious machine which we have described as a door, and on the other by the old tower, covered with ivy and studded with wild flowers. No one would have thought on seeing it thus wrinkled and adorned, like an old lady whose grandchildren come to greet her on her birthday, that it could have related terrible tragedies if it could have added a voice to the menacing ears which an old proverb assigns to walls. The garden was crossed by a path of red gravel, edged by a border of thick box of many years' growth, and of a tone and colour that would have delighted the heart of Delacroix, our modern Rubens. This path was formed in the shape of the figure 8, thus in its windings making a walk of sixty feet in a garden only twenty feet in length. Never had Flora, the fresh and smiling goddess of gardeners, been honoured with a purer or more minute worship than that which was paid to her in this little enclosure. In fact, of the twenty rose-trees which formed the *parterre*, not one bore the mark of the fly, nor were there to be seen any of those clusters of green insects which destroy plants growing in a damp soil. And yet it was not because the damp had been excluded from the garden. The earth, black as soot, and the thick foliage of the trees manifested its presence; besides, had natural humidity been wanting, it could

have been immediately supplied by artificial means, thanks to a tank of water sunk in one of the corners of the garden, and upon which were stationed a frog and a toad, who, from antipathy, no doubt, always remained on the two opposite sides of the basin. There was not a blade of grass to be seen in the paths, nor a weed in the flower-beds; no fine lady ever trained and watered her geraniums, her cactus, and her rhododendrons with more pains than this gardener, as yet invisible, bestowed upon his little enclosure. Monte Cristo stopped after having closed the door and fastened the string to the nail, and cast a look around.

"The telegraph man," said he, "must either employ gardeners or devote himself passionately to agriculture." Suddenly he stumbled against something crouching behind a wheel-barrow filled with leaves. The something rose, uttering an exclamation of astonishment; and Monte Cristo found himself facing a man about fifty years old, who was plucking strawberries, which he was placing upon vine-leaves. He had twelve leaves and about as many strawberries, which, on rising suddenly, he let fall from his hand.

"You are gathering your crop, monsieur?" said Monte Cristo, smiling.

"Excuse me, monsieur," replied the man, raising his hand to his cap; "I am not up there, I know, but I have only just come down."

"Do not let me interfere with you in anything, my friend," said the count; "gather your strawberries, if indeed there are any left."

"I have ten left," said the man, "for here are eleven; and I had twenty-one, five more than last year. But I am not surprised; the spring has been warm this year, and strawberries require heat, monsieur. This is the reason that instead of the sixteen I had last year, I have this year, you see, eleven already plucked,—twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen. Ah, I miss three! they were here last night, monsieur. I am sure they were here,—I counted them. It must be the son of Mère Simon who has stolen them; I saw him strolling about here this morning. Ah, the young rascal! stealing in a garden!—he does not know where that may lead him."

"It is indeed a serious affair," said Monte Cristo; "but you should take into consideration the youth and appetite of the delinquent."

"Of course," said the gardener; "but that does not make it

the less unpleasant. But, monsieur, once more I beg pardon; perhaps you are an officer whom I am detaining here?" And he glanced timidly at the count's blue coat.

"Calm yourself, my friend," said the count, with that smile which at his will became so terrible or benevolent, and which this time beamed only with the latter expression; "I am not an inspector, but a traveller, brought hither by curiosity. I begin to regret my visit, since it causes you to lose your time."

"Ah! my time is not valuable," replied the man, with a melancholy smile. "Still, it belongs to government, and I ought not to waste it; but having received the signal that I might rest for an hour" (here he glanced at the sun-dial, for there was everything in the enclosure of Montlhéry, even a sun-dial), "and having ten minutes before me, and my strawberries being ripe, when a day longer—by the way, monsieur, do you think dormice eat them?"

"Indeed, I should think not," replied Monte Cristo, gravely; "dormice, monsieur, are bad neighbours for us who do not eat them preserved in honey, as the Romans did."

"What! did the Romans eat them?" said the gardener, "eat dormice?"

"I have read so in Petronius," said the count.

"Really! They can't be nice, though they do say 'as fat as a dormouse.' It is not a wonder that they are fat, sleeping all day and waking only that they may eat all night. Listen! Last year I had four apricots; they stole one. I had one nectarine, only one—well, monsieur, they ate half of it on the wall; a splendid nectarine, I never ate a better."

"You ate it?"

"That is to say, the half that was left, you understand; it was exquisite, monsieur. Ah, those gentlemen never choose the worst morsels,—like Mère Simon's son, who has not chosen the worst strawberries. But this next year," continued the horticulturist, "I'll take care it shall not happen, even if I sit up the whole night to watch when the strawberries are nearly ripe."

Monte Cristo had seen enough. Every man has a devouring passion in his heart, as every fruit has its worm; that of the telegraph man was horticulture. He began to pluck the vine-leaves which screened the sun from the grapes, and won the heart of the gardener.

"Did you come here, monsieur, to see the telegraph?" he said.

"Yes, if it be not contrary to the rules."

"Oh, no," said the gardener; "there are no orders against it, and there is no danger in it, since no one knows and no one can know what we are saying."

"I have been told," said the count, "that you do not always yourselves understand the signals you repeat."

"Certainly, monsieur; and that is what I like best," said the man, smiling.

"Why do you like that best?"

"Because then I have no responsibility. I am a machine then, and nothing else; and so long as I perform my duties, nothing more is required of me."

"Is it possible," said Monte Cristo to himself, "that I can have met with a man who has no ambition? That would spoil my plans."

"Monsieur," said the gardener, glancing at the sun-dial, "the ten minutes are nearly expired: I must return to my post. Will you go up with me?"

"I follow you."

Monte Cristo entered the tower, which was divided into three stories. The lowest contained gardening implements, such as spades, rakes, watering-pots, hung against the wall; this was all the furniture. The second was the usual dwelling, or rather sleeping place of the man; it contained a few poor articles of household furniture,—a bed, a table, two chairs, a stone pitcher, and some dry herbs hung up to the ceiling, which the count recognised as sweet peas, and of which the good man was preserving the seeds, having labelled them with as much care as if he had been master botanist in the Jardin des Plantes.

"Does it require much study to learn the art of telegraphing, monsieur?" asked Monte Cristo.

"The study does not take long; it was acting as a supernumerary that was so tedious."

"And what is the pay?"

"A thousand livres, monsieur."

"It is very little."

"Yes; but then we are lodged, as you perceive."

Monte Cristo looked at the room. "It is to be hoped that he will not cling to his lodging!" he murmured.

They passed on to the third story; it was the room of the telegraph. Monte Cristo looked in turns at the two iron handles by which the machine was worked. "It is very interesting," he said; "but in the long run it is a life which must be very tedious to you."

"Yes. At first the continual watching gave me a crick in the neck, but at the end of a year I became used to it; and then we have our hours of recreation and our holidays."

"Holidays?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"When we have a fog."

"Ah, to be sure."

"Those are indeed holidays to me. I go into the garden; I plant, I prune, I trim, I kill the insects all day long."

"How long have you been here?"

"Ten years and five as a supernumerary make fifteen."

"You are—"

"Fifty-five years old."

"How long must you have served to claim the pension?"

"Oh, monsieur, twenty-five years."

"And how much is the pension?"

"A hundred crowns."

"Poor humanity!" murmured Monte Cristo.

"What did you say, monsieur?" asked the man.

"I said it is very interesting."

"What is?"

"Everything you are showing me. And you really understand none of these signals?"

"None at all."

"And have you never tried to understand them?"

"Never. Why should I?"

"But still there are some signals addressed only to you."

"Certainly."

"And do you understand them?"

"They are always the same."

"And they mean—"

"'Nothing new;' 'You have an hour;' or 'To-morrow.'"

"This is simple enough," said the count; "but look! is not your correspondent making signals?"

"Ah, yes; thank you, monsieur."

"And what is he saying,—anything which you can understand?"

"Yes; he asks if I am ready."

"And you reply?"

"By a signal which tells my right-hand correspondent that I am ready, while it gives notice to my left-hand correspondent to prepare in his turn."

"It is very ingenious," said the count.

"You will see," said the man, proudly; 'in five minutes he will speak."

"I have, then, five minutes," said Monte Cristo to himself; "it is more time than I require. My dear monsieur, will you allow me to ask you a question?"

"What is it, monsieur?"

"You are fond of gardening?"

"Passionately."

"And you would be pleased to have, instead of this terrace of twenty feet, an enclosure of two acres?"

"Monsieur, I should make a terrestrial paradise of it."

"You live badly on your thousand livres?"

"Badly enough, but yet live."

"Yes; but you have only a wretched garden!"

"True, the garden is not large."

"And then, such as it is, it is filled with dormice, who eat everything."

"Ah! they are my scourges."

"Tell me, should you have the misfortune to turn your head while your right-hand correspondent is telegraphing—"

"I should not see anything."

"Then what would happen?"

"I could not repeat the signals."

"And then?"

"Not having repeated them through negligence, I should be fined."

"How much?"

"A hundred livres."

"The tenth of your income; that would be a pretty business!"

"Ah!" said the man.

"Has it ever happened to you?" said Monte Cristo.

"Once, sir, when I was grafting a rose-tree."

"Well, suppose you were to alter a signal and substitute another?"

"Ah, that is another case; I should be turned off and lose my pension."

"Three hundred livres?"

"A hundred crowns, yes, monsieur; so you see that I am not likely to do anything of the kind."

"Not even for fifteen years' wages? Come, it is worth thinking about, eh?"

"For fifteen thousand livres?"

"Yes."

"Monsieur, you alarm me."

"Nonsense."

"Monsieur, you are tempting me."

"Just so; fifteen thousand livres, do you understand?"

"Monsieur, let me see my right-hand correspondent now!"

"On the contrary, do not look at him, but on this."

"What is it?"

"What! do you not know these little papers?"

"Bank-notes!"

"Exactly; there are fifteen of them."

"And whose are they?"

"Yours, if you like."

"Mine!" exclaimed the man, half-suffocated.

"Yes; yours,—your own property."

"Monsieur, my right-hand correspondent is signalling."

"Let him signal."

"Monsieur, you have distracted me; I shall be fined."

"That will cost you a hundred livres; you see it is your interest to take my bank-notes."

"Monsieur, my right-hand correspondent redoubles his signals; he is impatient."

"Never mind, take these;" and the count placed the packet in the hands of the man. "Now this is not all," he said; "you cannot live upon your fifteen thousand livres."

"I shall still have my place."

"No; you will lose it, for you are going to alter the signals of your correspondent."

"Oh, monsieur, what are you proposing?"

"A jest."

"Monsieur, unless you force me—"

"I intend to force you effectually;" and Monte Cristo drew another packet from his pocket. "Here are ten thousand more livres," he said; "with the fifteen thousand already in your pocket, they will make twenty-five thousand. With five thousand you can buy a pretty little house with two acres of land; the remaining twenty thousand will bring you in a thousand livres a year."

"A garden with two acres of land!"

"And a thousand livres a year."

"Oh, heavens!"

"Come, take them!" and Monte Cristo forced the bank-notes into his hand.

"What am I to do?"

"Nothing very difficult."

"But what is it?"

"To repeat these signals." Monte Cristo took a paper from his pocket, upon which were drawn three signals, with numbers to indicate the order in which they were to be sent.

"There, you see it will not take long."

"Yes; but—"

"Do this, and you will have nectarines and all the rest."

The mark was hit; red with fever, while large drops fell from his brow, the man executed, one after the other, the three signals given by the count, notwithstanding the frantic excitement displayed by the right-hand correspondent, who, not understanding the change, began to think the gardener had become mad. As to the left-hand correspondent, he conscientiously repeated the same signals, which were faithfully forwarded to the Minister of the Interior.

"Now you are rich," said Monte Cristo.

"Yes," replied the man: "but at what a price!"

"Listen, my friend," said Monte Cristo. "I do not wish to cause you any remorse; believe me, then, when I swear to you that you have done no one any wrong, and you have served the designs of Providence."

The man looked at the bank-notes, felt them, counted them; he turned pale, then red, then rushed into his room to drink a glass of water, but before reaching the water-jug, he fainted in the midst of his dried herbs.

Five minutes after the new telegram reached the minister, Debray had the horses put to his carriage, and hastened to Danglars's mansion.

"Has your husband any Spanish bonds?" he asked of the baroness.

"I think so, indeed! He has six millions' worth."

"He must sell them, at any price."

"Why?"

"Because Don Carlos has fled from Bourges, and has returned to Spain."

"How do you know?"

Debray shrugged his shoulders. "The idea of asking how I hear the news!" he said.

The baroness did not wait for a repetition; she ran to her husband, who immediately hastened to his agent and ordered him to sell at any price. When it was seen that Danglars sold, the Spanish funds fell directly. Danglars lost five hundred thousand livres; but he rid himself of all his Spanish shares. The same evening the following was read in *Le Messager*:—

"*Telegraphic despatch.*—The king, Don Carlos, has escaped the vigilance exercised over him at Bourges, and has returned to Spain by the Catalonian frontier. Barcelona has risen in his favour."

All that evening nothing was spoken of but the foresight of Danglars, who had sold his shares, and of the luck of the stock-jobber, who had lost only five hundred thousand livres by such a blow. Those who had kept their shares, or bought those of Danglars, considered themselves as ruined, and passed a very bad night.

Next morning *Le Moniteur* contained the following:—

"It was without any foundation that *Le Messager* yesterday announced the flight of Don Carlos and the revolt of Barcelona. The king, Don Carlos, has not left Bourges, and the peninsula is in the enjoyment of profound peace. A telegraphic signal improperly interpreted, owing to the fog, was the cause of this error."

The funds rose by double the amount of the fall. This, reckoning his loss and what he had missed gaining, made the difference of a million to Danglars.

"Good!" said Monte Cristo to Morrel, who was at his house when the news arrived of the strange reverse of fortune of which Danglars had been the victim; "I have just made a discovery for twenty-five thousand livres for which I would have paid a hundred thousand."

"What have you discovered?" asked Morrel.

"I have just discovered the method of ridding a gardener of the dormice that eat his peaches."

CHAPTER LXII

GHOSTS

At first sight the exterior of the house at Auteuil presented nothing splendid, nothing one would expect to see in the residence of the magnificent Count of Monte Cristo. But this simplicity was but according to the will of its master, who had positively ordered nothing to be altered outside,—as was apparent to any one observing the interior. In fact, as soon as the door was opened, the scene changed. M. Bertuccio had outdone himself in the taste displayed in the furnishing, and in the rapidity with which it was executed. As formerly the Duc d'Antin had in a single night caused a whole avenue of trees to be cut down that annoyed Louis XIV., so in three days had M. Bertuccio planted an entirely bare court with

poplars, large, spreading sycamores shading the different parts of the house, before which, instead of the usual paving-stones half hidden by the grass, there extended a turf lawn but that morning laid down, and upon which the water was yet glistening. For the rest, the orders had been issued by the count; he himself had given a plan to Bertuccio, marking the spot where each tree was to be planted, and the shape and extent of the lawn which was to succeed the paving-stones. Thus the house had become unrecognisable; and Bertuccio himself declared that he scarcely knew it, encircled as it was by a framework of trees. The steward would not have objected, while he was about it, to have made some improvements in the garden; but the count had positively forbidden it to be touched. Bertuccio made amends, however, by loading the ante-chambers, staircases, and chimneys with flowers. What especially exhibited the skill of the steward and the profound science of the master—the one in service, the other in directing service—was that this house, which appeared only the night before so sad and gloomy, impregnated with that sickly smell one can almost fancy to be the smell of time, had in one day acquired the aspect of life, was scented with its master's favourite perfumes, and had the very light regulated according to his wish. When the count arrived, he had under his touch his books and arms; his eyes rested upon his favourite pictures; his dogs whose caresses he loved welcomed him in the ante-chamber; the birds whose songs delighted him cheered him with their music; and the house, awakened from its long sleep, like the palace of the Sleeping Beauty in the wood, lived, sang, and bloomed like the houses we have long cherished, and in which when we are forced to leave them we leave a part of our souls. The servants passed gaily along the fine courtyard; some, belonging to the kitchens, glided down the stairs, restored but the previous day, as if they had always inhabited the house; others occupied the coach-houses, where the equipages, encased and numbered, appeared to have been installed for the last fifty years; and in the stables the horses replied by neighing to the grooms, who spoke to them with much more respect than many servants pay their masters.

The library was divided into two parts on two sides of the room and contained upwards of two thousand volumes. One division was entirely devoted to modern romances; and even the one which had been published but the day before was to be seen in its place in all the dignity of its red and gold binding. On the other side of the house, corresponding with the library was the conservatory, ornamented with rare flowers blossoming

in china jars; and in the midst of the greenhouse, marvellous alike to sight and smell, was a billiard-table apparently abandoned during the last hour by the players who had left the balls on the cloth. One chamber alone had been respected by the magnificent Bertuccio. Before this room, situated in the left-hand corner of the first story, to which ascent was made by the grand staircase, and from which there was egress by the secret staircase, the servants passed with curiosity, and Bertuccio with terror. At five o'clock precisely, the count arrived before the house at Auteuil, followed by Ali. Bertuccio was awaiting this arrival with impatience mingled with uneasiness; he hoped for some compliments, while at the same time he feared to encounter frowns. Monte Cristo descended from his carriage in the courtyard, went everywhere through the house and took a turn in the garden, silent and giving no sign either of approbation or displeasure. But on entering his bedroom, opposite the closed chamber, he extended his hand towards the drawer of a small rosewood table which he had noticed on his first visit to the house, "That will at least serve to put my gloves in," he said.

"Will your excellency deign to open it?" said the delighted Bertuccio; "you will find gloves in it."

In other articles of furniture the count found everything he required,—smelling-bottles, cigars, *bijouterie*. "Good!" he said; and M. Bertuccio withdrew enraptured,—so great, so powerful was the influence exercised by this man over all who surrounded him.

At precisely six o'clock the clatter of horses' hoofs was heard at the entrance door; it was our captain of Spahis, who had arrived on Medea. Monte Cristo awaited him at the entrance with a smile on his lips.

"I am sure I am the first," cried Morrel; "I did it on purpose to have you a minute to myself before every one came. Julie and Emmanuel have a thousand things to tell you. Ah! really this is magnificent! But tell me, count, will your people take care of my horse?"

"Do not alarm yourself, my dear Maximilian; they understand."

"I mean because he wants petting. If you had seen at what a pace he came,—like the wind!"

"I should think so,—a horse that cost five thousand livres!" said Monte Cristo, in the tone which a father would use towards a son.

"Do you regret them?" asked Morrel, with his open laugh.

"I? Certainly not!" replied the count. "No: I should only regret if the horse had not proved good."

"It is so good that I have distanced M. de Château-Renaud, one of the best riders in France, and M. Debray, who both mount the minister's Arabians; and close at their heels are the horses of Madame Danglars, who always go at six leagues an hour."

"Then they follow you?" asked Monte Cristo.

"See! they are here!" And at the same minute a carriage with smoking horses, accompanied by two mounted gentlemen, arrived at the gate, which opened before them. The carriage drove round and stopped at the steps, followed by the horsemen. The instant Debray had touched the ground, he was at the carriage-door. He offered his hand to the baroness, who, descending, took it with a peculiarity of manner imperceptible to every one but Monte Cristo. But nothing escaped the count's notice; and he observed a little note slipped with an indescribable ease, bespeaking the frequent practice of this manœuvre, from the hand of Madame Danglars to that of the minister's secretary. After his wife the banker descended, pale as though he had issued from his tomb instead of his carriage. Madame Danglars threw a rapid and inquiring glance around, which could be interpreted by Monte Cristo alone, embracing the courtyard, the peristyle, and the front of the house; then, repressing a slight emotion, which must have been seen on her countenance if she had permitted her face to become pale, she ascended the steps, saying to Morrel, "Monsieur, if you were a friend of mine I should ask you if you would sell your horse."

Morrel smiled with an expression very like a grimace, and then turned round to Monte Cristo as if to ask him to extricate him from his embarrassment. The count understood him. "Ah, madame!" he said, "why did you not make that request of me?"

"With you, monsieur," replied the baroness, "one can wish for nothing, one is so sure to obtain it. If it were so with M. Morrel—"

"Unfortunately," replied the count, "I am witness that M. Morrel cannot give up his horse, his honour being engaged in keeping it."

"How so?"

"He laid a wager he would tame Medea in the space of six months. You understand now that if he were to get rid of it before the time named, he would not only lose his bet, but people would say he was afraid; and a brave captain of Spahis cannot

risk this, even to gratify a pretty woman, which is in my opinion one of the most sacred obligations in the world."

"You see my position, madame," said Morrel, bestowing a grateful smile on Monte Cristo.

"It seems to me," said Danglars, in his coarse tone, ill-concealed by a forced smile, "that you have already got horses enough."

Madame Danglars seldom allowed remarks of this kind to pass unnoticed; but to the surprise of the young people she pretended not to hear it, and said nothing. Monte Cristo smiled at her unusual humility, and showed her two immense porcelain jars, covered with marine plants of a size and delicacy that could be produced only by nature. The baroness was astonished. "Why," said she, "you could plant one of the chestnut-trees in the Tuileries in one of those! How can such enormous jars have been manufactured?"

"Ah, madame!" replied Monte Cristo, "you must not ask of us, the manufacturers of statuettes and of glass-muslin, such a question. It is the work of another age, constructed by the genii of earth and water."

"How so? At what period can that have been?"

"I do not know; I have only heard that an emperor of China had an oven built, and that in this oven twelve jars like this were successively baked. Two broke, from the heat of the fire; the other ten were sunk three hundred fathoms deep into the sea. The sea, knowing what was required of her, threw over them her weeds, encircled them with coral, and encrusted them with shells; the whole was cemented by remaining two hundred years beneath these almost impervious depths,—for a revolution carried away the emperor who wished to make the trial, and only left the documents proving the manufacture of the jars and their descent into the sea. At the end of two hundred years the documents were found; and they thought of bringing up the jars. Divers descended in machines, made expressly on the discovery, into the bay where they were thrown; but of ten three only remained, the rest having been broken by the waves. I am fond of these jars, upon which perhaps misshapen, frightful monsters have fixed their cold dull eyes, and in which myriads of small fish have slept, seeking a refuge from the pursuit of their enemies."

Meanwhile Danglars, who cared little for curiosities, was mechanically tearing off the blossoms of a splendid orange-tree one after another. When he had finished with the orange-tree he began at the cactus; but this, not being so easily plucked as

the orange-tree, pricked him dreadfully. He shuddered, and rubbed his eyes as though awaking from a dream.

"Monsieur," said Monte Cristo to him, "I do not recommend my pictures to you who possess such splendid paintings; but nevertheless here are two by Hobbema, a Paul Potter, a Mieris, two by Gerard Douw, a Raphael, a Vandyke, a Zurbaran, and two or three Murillos worth looking at."

"Stay!" said Debray; "I recognise this Hobbema."

"Ah, indeed!"

"Yes; it was proposed for the Museum."

"Which, I believe, does not contain one?" said Monte Cristo.

"No; and yet they refused to buy it."

"Why?" said Château-Renaud.

"You pretend not to know; because government was not rich enough."

"Ah, pardon me!" said Château-Renaud; "I have heard of these things every day during the last eight years, and I cannot understand them yet."

"You will by and by," said Debray.

"I think not," replied Château-Renaud.

"Major Bartolomeo Cavalcanti and Vicomte Andrea Cavalcanti!" announced Baptistin.

A black satin stock, fresh from the maker's hands, grey mustaches, a bold eye, a major's uniform ornamented with three medals and five crosses—in fact, the thorough bearing of an old soldier—such was the appearance of Major Bartolomeo Cavalcanti, that tender father with whom we are already acquainted. Close to him, dressed in entirely new clothes, advanced smilingly Vicomte Andrea Cavalcanti, the dutiful son, whom we also know. The three young men were talking together. On the entrance of the new-comers their eyes glanced from father to son, and then naturally enough rested on the latter, whom they began criticising.

"Cavalcanti!" said Debray.

"A fine name!" said Morrel.

"Yes," said Château-Renaud; "these Italians are well named and badly dressed."

"You are fastidious, Château-Renaud," replied Debray; "those clothes are well cut and quite new."

"That is just what I find fault with. That gentleman appears to be well dressed for the first time in his life."

"Who are those gentlemen?" asked Danglars of Monte Cristo.

"You heard,—Cavalcanti."

"That tells me their name and nothing else."

"Ah, true! You do not know the Italian nobility; the Cavalcanti are all descended from princes."

"Have they any fortune?"

"An enormous one."

"What do they do?"

"They try to spend it all. They have some business with you, I think, from what they told me the day before yesterday. I indeed invited them here to-day on your account. I will introduce you to them."

"But they appear to speak French with a very pure accent," said Danglars.

"The son has been educated in a college in the South,—in Marseilles, I believe, or in that neighbourhood. You will find him quite enthusiastic."

"Upon what subject?" asked Madame Danglars.

"The French ladies, madame. He has made up his mind to take a wife from Paris."

"A fine idea, that of his!" said Danglars, shrugging his shoulders.

Madame Danglars looked at her husband with an expression which at any other time would have indicated a storm, but for the second time she controlled herself.

"The baron appears thoughtful to-day," said Monte Cristo to her; "are they going to put him in the ministry?"

"Not yet, I think. More likely he has been speculating on the Bourse and has lost money."

"Monsieur and Madame de Villefort!" cried Baptistin.

The two persons thus announced entered. M. de Villefort, notwithstanding his self-control, was visibly affected; and when Monte Cristo touched his hand he perceived that it trembled. "Certainly, women alone know how to dissimulate," said he to himself, glancing at Madame Danglars, who was smiling on the *procureur du roi* and embracing his wife. After a short time the count saw Bertuccio, who until then had been occupied on the other side of the house, glide into an adjoining room. He went to him. "What do you want, M. Bertuccio?" said he.

"Your excellency has not stated the number of guests."

"Ah, true!"

"How many covers?"

"Count for yourself."

"Is every one here, your excellency?"

"Yes."

Bertuccio glanced through the door, which was ajar. The count watched him. "Good heavens!" he exclaimed.

"What is the matter?" said the count.

"That woman! that woman!"

"Which?"

"The one with a white dress and so many diamonds,—the fair one."

"Madame Danglars?"

"I do not know her name; but it is she, monsieur, it is she!"

"Whom do you mean?"

"The woman of the garden!—she that was *enceinte*—she who was walking while she waited for—" Bertuccio stood at the open door, with his eyes starting and his hair on end.

"Waiting for whom?"

Bertuccio, without answering, pointed to Villefort almost with the gesture which Macbeth used to point out Banquo. "Oh, oh!" he at length muttered, "do you see?"

"What? Who?"

"Him!"

"Him! M. de Villefort, the *procureur du roi?* Certainly I see him."

"Then I did not kill him!"

"Really, I think you are going mad, good Bertuccio," said the count.

"Then he is not dead!"

"No; you see plainly he is not dead. Instead of striking between the sixth and seventh left ribs, as your countrymen do, you must have struck higher or lower; and life is very tenacious in these lawyers,—or rather there is no truth in anything you have told me; it was a flight of the imagination, a dream of your fancy. You went to sleep full of thoughts of vengeance; they weighed heavily upon your stomach,—you had the nightmare, that's all. Come, calm yourself, and reckon: Monsieur and Madame de Villefort, two; Monsieur and Madame Danglars, four; M. de Château-Renaud, M. Debray, M. Morrel, seven; Major Bartolomeo Cavalcanti, eight."

"Eight!" repeated Bertuccio.

"Stop! You are in a shocking hurry to be off; you forget one of my guests. Lean a little to the left. Stay! look at M. Andrea Cavalcanti, that young man in a black coat, looking at Murillo's Madonna; now he is turning."

This time Bertuccio would have uttered an exclamation had not a look from Monte Cristo silenced him. "Benedetto!" he muttered; "fatality!"

"Half-past six o'clock has just struck, M. Bertuccio," said the count, severely; "I ordered dinner at that hour, and I do

not like to wait;" and he returned to his guests, while Bertuccio, leaning against the walls, succeeded in reaching the dining-room. Five minutes afterwards the doors of the drawing-room were thrown open, and Bertuccio, appearing, said with a violent effort, "Monsieur the Count is served."

The Count of Monte Cristo offered his arm to Madame de Villefort. "M. de Villefort," he said, "will you conduct the Baronne Danglars?"

Villefort complied, and they passed on to the dining-room.

CHAPTER LXIII

THE DINNER

It was evident that one sentiment animated all of the guests on entering the dining-room. Each one asked himself what strange influence had conducted them to this house; and yet astonished, even uneasy though they were, they still felt they would not like to be absent. Though the recent date of the count's social relations, his eccentric and isolated position, his astounding and almost fabulous fortune should have suggested to the men the duty of circumspection, and to the women the impropriety of entering a house where there were no women to receive them, men and women broke the bounds of caution and conventionality; and curiosity, urging with its irresistible spur, triumphed over everything. Even Cavalcanti and his son—the one in spite of his stiffness, the other in spite of his recklessness—seemed preoccupied on finding themselves in the house of this man whose purposes they could not comprehend, brought into association with other men whom they then saw for the first time. Madame Danglars had started when Villefort, on the count's invitation, offered his arm; and Villefort felt that his glance was uneasy beneath his gold spectacles, when he felt the arm of the baroness press upon his own. Nothing of this had escaped the count; and even by this mere contact of individuals the scene had already acquired considerable interest for an observer. M. de Villefort had on the right hand Madame Danglars, on his left Morrel. The count was seated between Madame de Villefort and Danglars; the other seats were filled by Debray, who was placed between the two Cavalcanti, and by Château-Renaud, seated between Madame de Villefort and Morrel.

The repast was magnificent; Monte Cristo had endeavoured

completely to overturn the Parisian symmetry, and to feed the curiosity rather than the appetite of his guests. It was an Oriental feast that he offered to them, but Oriental in the way that feasts of Arabian fairies might be. Every delicious fruit that the four quarters of the globe could provide was heaped in vases from China and jars from Japan. Rare birds, retaining their most brilliant plumage; enormous fish, spread upon massive silver dishes; together with every wine produced in the Archipelago, Asia Minor, or the Cape, sparkling in bottles whose grotesque shape seemed to give an additional flavour to the wine,—all these, like one of those displays with which Apicius of old gratified his guests, passed in review before the eyes of the Parisians, who understood that it was possible to expend one thousand louis upon a dinner for ten persons, but only on the condition of eating pearls, like Cleopatra, or drinking beaten gold, like Lorenzo de Medici. Monte Cristo noticed the general astonishment, and began laughing and joking about it. "Gentlemen," he said, "you will admit that when one has arrived at a certain degree of fortune the superfluities of life are the only necessities; and the ladies will allow that after having risen to a certain eminence of position the ideal alone can be more exalted. Now, to follow out this reasoning, what is the marvellous? That which we do not understand. What is it that we really desire? That which we cannot obtain. Now, to see things which I cannot understand, to procure impossibilities, these are the study of my life. I gratify my wishes by two means,—my will and my money. I take as much interest in the pursuit of some whim as you do, M. Danglars, in forming a new railway line; you, M. de Villefort, in condemning a culprit to death; you, M. Debray, in pacifying a kingdom; you M. de Château-Renaud, in pleasing a woman; and you, Morrel, in breaking a horse that no one can ride. For example, you see these two fish,—one brought from fifty leagues beyond St. Petersburg, the other from within five leagues of Naples. Is it not amusing to see them both on the same table?"

"What are the two fish?" asked Danglars.

"M. de Château-Renaud, who has lived in Russia, will tell you the name of one," replied Monte Cristo; "and Major Cavalcanti, who is an Italian, will tell you the name of the other."

"This one is, I think, a sterlet," said Château-Renaud.

"And that one," said Cavalcanti, "is, if I mistake not, a lamprey."

"Just so. Now, M. Danglars, ask these gentlemen where they are caught."

"Sterlets," said Château-Renaud, "are found only in the Volga."

"And," said Cavalcanti, "I know that Lake Fusaro alone supplies lampreys of that size."

"Exactly; one comes from the Volga, and the other from Lake Fusaro."

"Impossible!" cried all the guests simultaneously.

"Well, this is just what amuses me," said Monte Cristo. "I am like Nero,—*cupitor impossibilium*; and that it is which is amusing you at this moment. This fish, which very likely is no better than perch or salmon, seems exquisite to you because it seemed impossible to procure it, and yet it is here."

"But how could you have these fish brought to France?"

"Oh, nothing more easy. Each fish was brought over in a cask,—one filled with river herbs and weeds, the other with rushes and lake plants; they were placed in a wagon built on purpose. And thus the sterlet lived twelve days, the lamprey eight; and both were alive when my cook seized them, killing one with milk, and the other with wine. You do not believe me, M. Danglars!"

"I cannot help doubting," answered Danglars, with his stupid smile.

"Baptistin," said the count, "have the other fish brought in,—the sterlet and the lamprey which came in the other casks, and which are yet alive." Danglars opened his bewildered eyes; the company clapped their hands. Four servants carried in two casks covered with aquatic plants, and in each of which was breathing a fish similar to those on the table.

"But why have two of each sort?" asked Danglars.

"Merely because one might die," carelessly answered Monte Cristo.

"You are certainly an extraordinary man," said Danglars; "and philosophers may well say it is a fine thing to be rich."

"And to have ideas," added Madame Danglars.

"Oh, do not give me credit on that score, madame; it was a practice much in vogue among the Romans. Pliny relates that they sent slaves from Ostia to Rome, who carried on their heads fish of the species which he calls the *mulus*, and which from the description was probably the gold-fish. It was also considered a luxury to have them alive, it being an amusing sight to see them die,—for when dying they change colour three or four times, and like the rainbow when it disappears, pass through all the prismatic shades; after that they were sent to

the kitchen. Their agony formed part of their merit; if they were not seen alive, they were despised when dead."

"Yes," said Debray; "but then Ostia is only a few leagues from Rome."

"True," said Monte Cristo; "but what would be the use of living eighteen hundred years after Lucullus, if we can do no better than he could?"

The two Cavalcanti opened their eyes, but had the good sense not to say anything.

"All this is very extraordinary," said Château-Renaud; "still, what I admire the most, I confess, is the marvellous promptitude with which your orders are executed. Is it not true that you bought this house only five or six days ago?"

"Certainly not longer."

"Well, I am sure it is quite transformed since last week. If I remember rightly, it had another entrance, and the courtyard was paved and empty; while to-day we have a splendid lawn, bordered by trees which appear to be a hundred years old."

"Why not? I am fond of grass and shade," said Monte Cristo.

"Yes," said Madame de Villefort; "the door was towards the road before. And on the day of my miraculous escape you brought me into the house from the road, I remember."

"Yes, madame," said Monte Cristo; "but I preferred having an entrance which would allow me to see the Bois de Boulogne over my gate."

"In four days!" said Morrel; "it is extraordinary!"

"Indeed," said Château-Renaud, "to make a new house out of an old one is a wonderful achievement; this house was very old, and dull too. I recollect coming for my mother to look at it when M. de Saint-Méran advertised it for sale two or three years ago."

"M. de Saint-Méran!" said Madame de Villefort; "then this house belonged to M. de Saint-Méran before you bought it?"

"It appears so," replied Monte Cristo.

"What! 'it appears?' Do you not know of whom you purchased it?"

"No, indeed; my steward transacts all this business for me."

"It is certainly ten years since the house had been occupied," said Château-Renaud; "and it was quite melancholy to look at it, with the blinds closed, the doors locked, and the weeds in the court. Really, if the house had not belonged to the father-in-law of the *procureur du roi*, one might have thought it some accursed place where a horrible crime had been committed."

Villefort, who had hitherto not tasted the three or four glasses of rare wine which were placed before him, here took one, and drank it off. Monte Cristo allowed a moment to elapse, and then said, "It is singular, baron, but the same idea came to me the first time I entered the house; it looked so gloomy I should never have bought it if my steward had not acted for me. Perhaps the fellow had been bribed by the notary."

"It is probable," stammered out Villefort, trying to smile; "but believe me, I have nothing to do with that bribery. This house is part of the marriage-portion of Valentine; and M. de Saint-Méran wished to sell it, for if it had remained another year or two uninhabited, it would have fallen to ruin." It was Morrel's turn to become pale.

"There was especially one room," continued Monte Cristo, "very plain in appearance, hung with red damask, which, I know not why, appeared to me quite dramatic."

"Why so?" asked Debray; "why dramatic?"

"Can we account for instinct?" said Monte Cristo. "Are there not some places where we seem to breathe sadness? why, we cannot tell. A chain of recollections, an idea, carries you back to other times, to other places, which very likely have no connection with the time and place in which we are at the moment. And there is something in that chamber which reminds me forcibly of the chamber of the Marquise de Ganges or that of Desdemona. Stay! since we have finished dinner, I will show it to you; and then we will take coffee in the garden. After dinner, the spectacle."

Monte Cristo looked inquiringly at his guests. Madame de Villefort rose, Monte Cristo did the same, and the rest followed their example. Villefort and Madame Danglars remained for a moment as if rooted to their seats; they interrogated each other with cold, glazed eyes.

"Did you hear?" said Madame Danglars.

"We must go," replied Villefort, offering his arm.

All the others were already scattered in different parts of the house, urged by curiosity,—for they thought the visit would not be limited to the one room, and that at the same time they would obtain a view of the rest of the building which Monte Cristo had made into a palace. Each one went out by the open doors. Monte Cristo waited for the two who remained; then when they had passed, he closed the procession with a smile, which if they could have understood it would have alarmed them much more than a visit to the room they were about to enter. They began by walking through the apart-

ments, many of which were fitted up in the Eastern style, with cushions and divans instead of beds, and pipes instead of furniture. The drawing-rooms were decorated with the rarest pictures by the old masters; the boudoirs hung with draperies from China, of fanciful colours, fantastic design, and wonderful texture. At length they arrived at the famous room. There was nothing particularly noticeable in it, except that, although daylight had disappeared, it was not lighted, and everything in it remained antique, while the other rooms had been redecorated. These two causes were enough to give it a gloomy effect.

"Oh!" cried Madame de Villefort. "It is really frightful!"

Madame Danglars tried to utter a few words, but was not heard. Many observations were made, which expressed the unanimous opinion that the chamber had a sinister appearance.

"Is it not so?" asked Monte Cristo. "Look at that large clumsy bed, hung with that gloomy, blood-coloured drapery! And those two crayon portraits, that have faded from the damp, do they not seem to say with their pale lips and staring eyes, 'We have seen'?"

Villefort became livid; Madame Danglars fell into a long seat placed near the chimney.

"Oh!" said Madame de Villefort, smiling, "are you courageous enough to sit down upon the very seat perhaps upon which the crime was committed?"

Madame Danglars rose suddenly.

"And then," said Monte Cristo, "this is not all."

"What is there more?" said Debray, who had not failed to notice the agitation of Madame Danglars.

"Ah! what else is there?" said Danglars; "for at present I cannot say that I have seen anything extraordinary. What do you say, M. Cavalcanti?"

"Ah!" said he, "we have at Pisa the tower of Ugolino; at Ferraro, the prison of Tasso; at Rimini, the room of Francesca and Paolo."

"Yes, but you have not this little staircase," said Monte Cristo, opening a door concealed by the drapery. "Look at it, and tell me what you think of it."

"What a wicked-looking crooked staircase," said M. de Château-Renaud, smiling.

"I do not know whether the wine of Chios produces melancholy, but certainly everything appears to me black in this house," said Debray.

Ever since Valentine's dowry had been mentioned, Morrel had been silent and sad.

"Can you imagine," said Monte Cristo, "some Othello or Abbé de Ganges, on a stormy, dark night, descending these stairs step by step, carrying a funereal burden, which he wishes to hide from the sight of man, if not from God?"

Madame Danglars half fainted on the arm of Villefort, who was obliged to support himself against the wall.

"Ah, madame!" cried Debray, "what is the matter with you? How pale you look!"

"This is what is the matter with her," said Madame de Villefort; "it is very simple,—M. de Monte Cristo is relating horrible stories to us, doubtless intending to frighten us to death."

"Yes," said Villefort, "really, count, you frighten the ladies."

"What is the matter?" asked Debray, in a whisper, of Madame Danglars.

"Nothing," she replied with a violent effort. "I want air! that is all."

"Will you come into the garden?" said Debray, advancing towards the back staircase.

"No, no!" she answered; "I would rather remain here."

"Are you really frightened, madame?" said Monte Cristo.

"Oh, no, monsieur," said Madame Danglars; "but you suppose scenes in a manner which gives them the appearance of reality."

"Ah, yes!" said Monte Cristo, smiling; "it is all a matter of the imagination. Why should we not imagine this the apartment of an honest family-woman; and this bed with red hangings, a bed visited by the goddess Lucina; and that mysterious staircase, the passage through which, not to disturb their sleep, the doctor and nurse pass, or even the father carrying the sleeping child?"

Here Madame Danglars, instead of being calmed by the pleasing picture, uttered a groan and fainted.

"Madame Danglars is ill," said Villefort; "it would be better to take her to her carriage."

"Oh! and I have forgotten my smelling-bottle!" said Monte Cristo.

"I have mine," said Madame de Villefort; and she passed over to Monte Cristo a bottle full of the same kind of red liquid whose good properties the count had tested on Edouard.

"Ah!" said Monte Cristo, taking it from her hand.

"Yes," she said, "at your advice I have tried."

"And have you succeeded?"

"I think so."

Madame Danglars was carried into the adjoining room; Monte Cristo dropped a very small portion of the red liquid upon her lips; she returned to consciousness. "Ah!" she cried, "what a frightful dream!"

Villefort pressed her hand to let her know it was not a dream. M. Danglars was sought, but little interested in poetical ideas, he had gone into the garden, and was talking with Major Cavalcanti on the projected railway from Leghorn to Florence. Monte Cristo seemed in despair. He took the arm of Madame Danglars, and conducted her into the garden, where they found Danglars taking coffee between the Cavalcanti. "Really, madame," he said, "did I alarm you much?"

"Oh, no, monsieur," she answered, "but you know things impress us differently, according to our different moods."

Villefort forced a laugh. "And sometimes, you know," he said, "an idea, a supposition, is sufficient."

"Well," said Monte Cristo, "you may believe me if you like, but it is my belief that a crime has been committed in this house."

"Take care!" said Madame de Villefort, "the *procureur du roi* is here."

"Ah!" replied Monte Cristo, "since that is the case I will take advantage of his presence to make my declaration."

"Your declaration!" said Villefort.

"Yes, before witnesses."

"Oh, this is very interesting," said Debray; "if there really has been a crime, we will investigate it."

"There has been a crime," said Monte Cristo. "Come this way, gentlemen; come, M. de Villefort, for a declaration to be available should be made before the competent authorities." He then took Villefort's arm, and at the same time holding that of Madame Danglars under his own, he dragged the *procureur* to the plaintain-tree, where the shade was thickest. All the other guests followed. "Stay," said Monte Cristo, "here, in this very spot" (and he stamped upon the ground), "I had the earth dug up and fresh mould put in, to refresh these old trees; well, my man, digging, found a box, or rather the iron-work of a box, in the midst of which was the skeleton of a newly-born infant."

Monte Cristo felt the arm of Madame Danglars stiffen, while that of Villefort trembled.

"A newly-born infant!" repeated Debray; "the devil! the affair is becoming serious, it seems to me!"

"Well," said Château-Renaud, "I was not wrong just now, then, when I said that houses had souls and faces like men, and that their exteriors carried the impress of their characters. This house was gloomy because it was remorseful; it was remorseful because it concealed a crime."

"Who said it was a crime?" asked Villefort, with a last effort.

"What! is it not a crime to bury a living child in a garden?" cried Monte Cristo. "And pray what do you call such an action?"

"But who said it was buried alive?"

"Why bury it there if it were dead? This garden has never been a cemetery."

"What is done to infanticides in this country?" asked Major Cavalcanti, innocently.

"Oh, their heads are soon cut off," said Danglars.

"Ah, indeed!" said Cavalcanti.

"I think so; am I not right, M. de Villefort?" asked Monte Cristo.

"Yes, count," replied M. de Villefort, in a voice now scarcely human.

Monte Cristo saw that the two persons for whom he had prepared this scene could bear no more; so not wishing to carry it too far, he said, "Come, gentlemen, some coffee, we seem to have forgotten it;" and he conducted the guests back to the table on the lawn.

"Indeed, count," said Madame Danglars, "I am ashamed to own it, but all your frightful stories have so upset me that I must beg you to let me sit down;" and she fell into a chair.

Monte Cristo bowed, and went to Madame de Villefort. "I think Madame Danglars again requires your bottle," he said.

But before Madame de Villefort could reach her friend, the *procureur* had found time to whisper to Madame Danglars, "I must speak to you."

"When?"

"To-morrow."

"Where?"

"In my office, if you will; that is the safest place."

"I will go." At this moment Madame de Villefort approached. "Thanks, my dear friend," said Madame Danglars, trying to smile; "it is over now, and I am much better."

CHAPTER LXIV

THE BEGGAR

THE evening passed on; Madame de Villefort expressed a desire to return to Paris, which Madame Danglars had not dared to do, notwithstanding the uneasiness she experienced. On his wife's request, M. de Villefort was the first to give the signal of departure. He offered a seat in his landau to Madame Danglars, that she might be under the care of his wife. As for M. Danglars, absorbed in an interesting conversation with M. Cavalcanti, he paid no attention to anything that was passing.

Monte Cristo, when he had begged the smelling-bottle of Madame de Villefort, had remarked the approach of Villefort to Madame Danglars, and had divined what he had said to her, though the words had been uttered in so low a voice as hardly to be heard by Madame Danglars. Without opposing their arrangements, he allowed Morrel, Château-Renaud, and Debray to leave on horseback, and the ladies in M. de Villefort's carriage. Danglars, more and more delighted with Major Cavalcanti, had offered him a seat in his carriage.

Andrea Cavalcanti found his tilbury waiting at the door; the groom, in every respect a caricature of the English fashion, was standing on tiptoe to hold a large iron-grey horse. Andrea had spoken very little during dinner; he was an intelligent lad, and he feared to utter some absurdity before so many grand people, among whom his dilating eyes beheld, not without fear, the *procureur du roi*. Then he had been seized upon by Danglars, who, after a rapid glance at the stiffnecked old major and his modest son, taking into consideration the hospitality of the count towards them, made up his mind that he was in the society of some nabob come to Paris to finish the worldly education of his only son. He contemplated with unspeakable delight the large diamond which shone on the major's little finger; for the major, like a prudent man, in the fear that some accident might happen to his bank-notes, had immediately converted them into articles of value. Then after dinner, on the pretext of business, he had questioned the father and son upon their mode of living; and the father and son, previously informed that it was through Danglars the one was to receive his forty-eight thousand livres, and the other fifty thousand livres annually, were so full of affability that they would have shaken hands even with the banker's servants, so much did their

gratitude feel the need of expression. One thing above all the rest heightened the respect, we almost might say the veneration of Danglars for Cavalcanti. The latter, faithful to the principle of Horace, *nil admirari*, had contented himself in proving his knowledge by saying in what lake the best lampreys were caught. Then he had eaten his portion of the one that was served without saying a word. Danglars therefore concluded that such luxuries were common at the table of the illustrious descendant of the Cavalcanti, who most likely in Lucca fed upon trout brought from Switzerland, and lobsters sent from England, by the same means used by the count to bring the lampreys from the Lake Fusaro, and the sterlets from the Volga; and therefore he received with marked cordiality these words of Cavalcanti, "To-morrow, monsieur, I shall have the honour of waiting upon you on business."

"And I, monsieur," said Danglars, "shall be most happy to receive you." Upon which he offered to take Cavalcanti in his carriage to the Hôtel des Princes, if it would not be depriving him of the company of his son. To this Cavalcanti replied by saying that for some time past his son had lived independently of him; that he had his own horses and carriages; and that not having come together, it would not be difficult for them to leave separately. The major seated himself therefore by the side of Danglars, who was more and more charmed with the ideas of order and economy which ruled this man, who yet allowed his son fifty thousand livres a year,—which would imply a fortune of five hundred thousand or six hundred thousand livres.

As for Andrea, he began, by way of showing off, to scold his groom, who, instead of bringing the tilbury to the steps of the house, had taken it to the outer door, thus giving him the trouble of walking thirty steps to reach it. The groom heard him with humility, took the bit of the impatient animal with his left hand, and with the right held out the reins to Andrea, who, taking them from him, rested his polished boot lightly on the step. At that moment a hand touched his shoulder. The young man turned round, thinking that Danglars or Monte Cristo had forgotten something they wished to tell him, and had recalled the matter just as he was departing. But instead of either of these, he saw a strange face, sunburnt and encircled by a beard, with eyes brilliant as carbuncles, and a smile upon the mouth which displayed a perfect set of white teeth, pointed and sharp as the wolf's or jackal's. A red handkerchief encircled his grey head; torn and filthy garments covered his

large bony limbs, which seemed as though, like those of a skeleton, they would rattle as he walked; and the hand with which he leaned upon the young man's shoulder, and which was the first thing Andrea saw, seemed of a gigantic size. Did the young man recognise that face by the light of the lantern in his tilbury, or was he merely struck with the horrible appearance of his interrogator? We cannot say, but only relate the fact that he shuddered and stepped back suddenly. "What do you want of me?" he asked.

"Pardon me, my friend, if I disturb you," said the man with the red handkerchief; "but I want to speak to you."

"You have no right to beg at night," said the groom, making a movement to rid his master of the troublesome intruder.

"I am not begging, my fine fellow," said the unknown to the servant, with so ironical an expression of eye and so frightful a smile that he started back; "I only wish to say two or three words to your master, who gave me a commission to execute about a fortnight ago."

"Come," said Andrea, with sufficient nerve for his servant not to perceive his agitation, "what do you want? Speak quickly, friend."

The man said in a low voice, "I wish—I wish you to spare me the walk back to Paris. I am very tired; and not having eaten so good a dinner as you have, I can scarcely support myself."

The young man shuddered at this strange familiarity. "Tell me," he said,—"tell me what you want."

"Well, then, I want you to take me up in your fine carriage, and carry me back." Andrea turned pale, but said nothing. "Yes," said the man, thrusting his hands into his pockets, and looking impudently at the youth; "I have taken the whim into my head; do you understand, M. Benedetto?"

At this name, no doubt, the young man reflected a little, for he went towards his groom, saying, "This man is right; I did indeed charge him with a commission, the result of which he must tell me. Walk to the barrier; there take a cab, that you may not be too late." The surprised groom retired.

"Let me at least reach a shady spot," said Andrea.

"Oh! as for that, I'll conduct you to a splendid spot," said the man with the handkerchief; and taking the horse's bit, he led the tilbury to a place where it was certainly impossible for any one to witness the honour that Andrea conferred upon him.

"Don't think I want the honour of riding in your fine

carriage," said he; "oh, no, it's only because I am tired, and also because I have a little business to talk over with you."

"Come, step in!" said the young man.

It was a pity this scene had not occurred in daylight, for it would have been a curious spectacle to see this rascal throwing himself heavily down on the cushion beside the young and elegant driver of the tilbury. Andrea drove past the last house in the village without saying a word to his companion, who smiled complacently, as though well pleased to find himself travelling in so comfortable a vehicle. Once out of Auteuil, Andrea looked around in order to assure himself that he could be neither seen nor heard; and then stopping the horse and crossing his arms before the man, he asked, "Now, tell me why you come to disturb my tranquillity?"

"But you, my boy, why have you deceived me?"

"How have I deceived you?"

"How,—do you ask? When we parted at the Pont du Var, you told me you were going to travel through Piedmont and Tuscany; but instead of that, you come to Paris."

"How does that annoy you?"

"It does not; on the contrary, I think it will answer my purpose."

"So," said Andrea, "you are speculating upon me?"

"What fine words he uses!"

"I warn you, M. Caderousse, that you are mistaken."

"Well, well, don't be angry, my boy. You know well enough what it is to be unfortunate; and misfortunes make us jealous. I thought you were earning a living in Tuscany or Piedmont by acting as *facchino* or *cicerone*; and I pitied you sincerely, as I would a child of my own. You know I always did call you my child."

"Come, come, what then?"

"Patience! patience!"

"I am patient, but go on."

"All at once I see you pass through the barrier with a groom, a tilbury, and fine new clothes. You must have discovered a mine, or else become a stockbroker."

"So that, as you acknowledge, you are jealous?"

"No, I am pleased,—so pleased that I wished to congratulate you; but as I am not quite properly dressed, I chose my opportunity, that I might not compromise you."

"Yes, and a fine opportunity you have chosen!" exclaimed Andrea; "you speak to me before my servant."

"How can I help that, my boy? I speak to you when I can

catch you. You have a quick horse, a light tilbury, you are naturally as slippery as an eel; if I had missed you to-night, I might not have had another chance."

"You see I do not conceal myself."

"You are lucky; I wish I could say as much. I do conceal myself; and then I was afraid you would not recognise me,—but you did," added Caderousse, with his unpleasant smile. "It was very polite of you."

"Come," said Andrea, "what do you want?"

"You do not speak affectionately to me, Benedetto, my old friend; that is not right. Take care, or I may become troublesome."

This menace smothered the young man's passion. He put his horse to a trot. "You should not speak so to an old friend, Caderousse, as you said just now. You are a native of Marseilles; I am—"

"Do you know, then, what you are now?"

"No; but I was brought up in Corsica. You are old and obstinate; I am young and wilful. Between folks like us threats are out of place; everything should be amicably arranged. Is it my fault if Fortune, which has frowned on you, has been kind to me?"

"Fortune has been kind to you, then? Your tilbury, your groom, your clothes, are not then hired? Good! so much the better!" said Caderousse, his eyes sparkling with avarice.

"Oh! you knew that well enough before speaking to me," said Andrea, becoming more and more excited. "If I had been wearing a handkerchief like yours on my head, rags on my back, and worn-out shoes on my feet, you would not have known me."

"You wrong me, my boy; at any rate, now that I have found you, nothing prevents my being as well dressed as any one, knowing, as I do, the goodness of your heart. If you have two coats, you will give me one of them. I used to divide my soup and beans with you when you were hungry."

"True," said Andrea.

"What an appetite you used to have! is it as good now?"

"Oh, yes," replied Andrea, laughing.

"How did you come to be dining with that prince whose house you have just left?"

"He is not a prince; simply a count."

"A count, and a rich one too, eh?"

"Yes, but you had better not have anything to say to him; he is probably not very patient."

"Oh, be satisfied! I have no design upon your count, and

you shall have him all to yourself. But," added Caderousse, again smiling with the disagreeable expression he had before assumed, "you must pay for it, you understand?"

"Well, what do you want?"

"I think that with a hundred livres per month—"

"Well?"

"I could live—"

"Upon a hundred livres!"

"Poorly, you understand; but with—"

"With?"

"With a hundred and fifty livres I should be quite happy."

"Here are two hundred," said Andrea; and he placed ten louis d'or in the hand of Caderousse.

"Good!" said Caderousse.

"Apply to the steward on the first day of every month, and you will receive the same sum."

"There now, again you degrade me."

"How so?"

"You put me in communication with the servants; no, take notice that I will have business only with you."

"Well, be it so, then. Take it from me, then, and on the first of every month, so long at least as I receive my income, you shall be paid yours."

"Come, come; I always said you were a fine fellow, and it is a blessing when good fortune happens to such as you. But tell me all about it."

"Why do you wish to know?" asked Cavalcanti.

"What! do you still distrust me?"

"No; well, I have found my father."

"What! a real father?"

"Of course, so long as he pays me—"

"You'll honour and believe him,—that's right. What is his name?"

"Major Cavalcanti."

"Is he pleased with you?"

"So far I have appeared to answer his purpose."

"And who found this father for you?"

"The Count of Monte Cristo."

"The man whose house you have just left?"

"Yes."

"I wish you would try to find me a situation with him as grandfather, since he holds the money-chest."

"Well, I will mention you to him. Meanwhile, what are you going to do?"

"I?"

"Yes, you."

"It is very kind of you to trouble yourself about me," said Caderousse.

"Since you interest yourself in my affairs, I think it is now my turn to ask you some questions."

"Ah, true! Well; I shall rent a room in some respectable house, wear a decent coat, shave every day, and go and read the papers in a café. Then in the evening I will go to the theatre; I shall have the appearance of a retired baker. This is my wish."

"Come, if you will only put this scheme into execution, and be steady, nothing could be better."

"Do you think so, M. Bossuet? And you, what will you become,—a peer of France?"

"Ah!" said Andrea, "who knows?"

"Major Cavalcanti is already one perhaps; but unfortunately hereditary rank is abolished."

"No politics, Caderousse! And now that you have all you want, and we understand each other, jump down from the tilbury and disappear."

"Not at all, my good friend."

"What! not at all?"

"Why, just think for a moment; with this red handkerchief on my head, with scarcely any shoes, no papers, and ten gold napoleons in my pocket, without reckoning what was there before, making in all just two hundred livres,—why, I should certainly be arrested at the barriers! Then to justify myself, I should be obliged to say that you gave me the money. This would cause inquiries; it would be found that I left Toulon without giving due notice, and I should then be reconducted to the shores of the Mediterranean. Then I should become simply No. 106; and good-by to my dream of resembling the retired baker! No, no, my boy; I prefer remaining honourably in the capital."

Andrea scowled. Certainly, as he had himself boasted, the reputed son of Major Cavalcanti was a wicked fellow. He drew up for an instant, and as he threw a rapid glance around, his hand went innocently into his pocket and began playing with the trigger-guard of a pocket-pistol. But meanwhile Caderousse, who had never taken his eyes off his companion, passed his hand behind his back, and very gently opened a long Spanish knife, which he always carried with him to be ready in case of need. The two friends, as we see, were worthy of and understood one

another. Andrea's hand left his pocket inoffensively, and was carried up to the red mustache, which it played with for some time. "Good Caderousse!" he said; "how happy you will be!"

"I will do my best," said the innkeeper of the Pont du Gard, returning his knife to his sleeve.

"Well, then, we will go into Paris. But how will you pass through the barrier without exciting suspicion? It seems to me that you are in more danger riding than on foot."

"Wait," said Caderousse, "we shall see." He then took the great-coat with the large collar, which the groom had left behind in the tilbury, and put it on his back; then he took off Cavalcanti's hat, which he placed upon his own head, and finally assumed the careless attitude of a servant whose master drives himself.

"But tell me," said Andrea, "am I to remain bareheaded?"

"Pooh!" said Caderousse; "it is so windy that your hat will appear to have been blown away."

"Come on, then," said Andrea; "and let us end it."

"Who is stopping you?" said Caderousse; "not I, I hope."

"Pshaw!" said Andrea.

They passed the barrier without accident. At the first cross-street Andrea stopped his horse, and Caderousse leaped out.

"Well!" said Andrea, "my servant's coat and my hat?"

"Ah!" said Caderousse, "you would not like me to risk taking cold?"

"But what am I to do?"

"You! oh, you are young, while I am beginning to get old. *Au revoir*, Benedetto;" and running into a court, he disappeared.

"Alas!" said Andrea, sighing, "one cannot be completely happy in this world!"

CHAPTER LXV

A CONJUGAL SCENE

At the Place Louis XV. the three young people separated,—that is to say, Morrel went by way of the boulevards, Château-Renaud took the Pont de la Révolution, and Debray followed the direction of the quay. Most probably Morrel and Château-Renaud returned to their "domestic hearths," as they say in the forum of the Chamber in well-turned speeches, and in the theatre of the Rue Richelieu in well-written pieces; but it was

not so with Debray. When he reached the wicket of the Louvre, he turned to the left, galloped across the Carrousel, passed through the Rue St. Roch, and issuing from the Rue de la Michodière, he arrived at M. Danglars's door at the same time that Villefort's landau, after having deposited him and his wife at the Faubourg St. Honoré, stopped to leave the baroness at her own house. Debray, with the air of a man familiar with the house, entered first into the court, threw his bridle to a footman, and returned to the carriage-door to receive Madame Danglars, to whom he offered his arm to conduct her to her apartments. The gate once closed, and Debray and the baroness alone in the court, he asked, "What was the matter with you, Hermine? and why were you so affected at that story, or rather fable, which the count related?"

"Because I have been in such shocking spirits all the evening, my friend," said the baroness.

"No, Hermine," replied Debray; "you cannot make me believe that. On the contrary, you were in excellent spirits when you arrived at the count's. M. Danglars was disagreeable, certainly; but I know how much you care for his ill-humour. Some one has vexed you. Tell me about it; you know well that I will not allow you to endure any impertinence."

"You are deceived, Lucien, I assure you," replied Madame Danglars; "and what I have told you is true, besides the ill-humour you remarked, but which I did not think it worth while to allude to."

It was evident that Madame Danglars was suffering from that nervous irritability which women frequently cannot account for even to themselves; or that, as Debray had conjectured, she had experienced some secret agitation that she would not acknowledge to any one. Being a man familiar with moodiness as one of the elements of female life, he did not then press his inquiries, but waited for a more appropriate opportunity, either to question her again or to receive an explanation voluntarily given. At the door of her chamber the baroness met Mademoiselle Cornélie, her confidential maid. "What is my daughter doing?" she asked.

"She practised all the evening and then went to bed," replied Mademoiselle Cornélie.

"Yet I think I hear her piano."

"It is Mademoiselle Louis d'Armilly, who is playing while mademoiselle is in bed."

"Well," said Madame Danglars, "come and undress me."

They entered the bedroom. Debray stretched himself upon

a large couch, and Madame Danglars passed on into her dressing-room with Mademoiselle Cornélie.

"My dear M. Lucien," said Madam Danglars, through the *portière*, "you are always complaining that Eugénie will not address a word to you."

"Madame," said Lucien, playing with a little dog, who, recognising him as a friend of the house, expected to be caressed, "I am not the only one who makes similar complaints; I think I heard Morcerf say that he could not extract a word from his *fiancée*."

"True," said Madame Danglars; "but I think that one of these days all that will be changed, and that you will see her enter your study."

"My study?"

"I mean that of the minister."

"And what for?"

"To ask for an engagement at the opera. Really, I never saw such an infatuation for music; it is quite ridiculous for a young lady of fashion."

Debray smiled. "Well," said he, "let her come with your consent and that of the baron, and we will try and give her an engagement, though we are very poor to pay such talent as hers."

"Go, Cornélie," said Madame Danglars; "I do not need you any longer."

Cornélie obeyed; and the next minute Madame Danglars left her room in a charming loose dress and came and sat down close to Debray. Then, thoughtful, she began to caress the little spaniel. Lucien looked at her for a moment in silence. "Come, Hermine," he said after a short time, "answer candidly; something vexes you, is it not so?"

"Nothing," answered the baroness. And yet, as she could scarcely breathe, she rose and went towards a looking-glass. "I am frightful to-night," she said.

Debray rose, smiling, and was about to contradict the baroness upon this latter point, when the door opened suddenly. M. Danglars appeared; Debray reseated himself. At the noise of the door Madame Danglars turned round and looked upon her husband with an astonishment she took no trouble to conceal.

"Good-evening, madame!" said the banker; "good evening, M. Debray!"

Probably the baroness thought this unexpected visit signified a desire to make amends for the sharp words he had uttered during the day. Assuming a dignified air, she turned round to

Debray without answering her husband. "Read me something, M. Debray," she said.

Debray, who was slightly disturbed at this visit, recovered himself when he saw the calmness of the baroness, and took up a book marked by a mother-of-pearl knife inlaid with gold.

"Excuse me," said the banker; "but you will tire yourself, baroness, by such late hours. It is eleven o'clock; and M. Debray lives at some distance from here."

Debray was petrified,—not that there was anything surprising in Danglars's tone, which was entirely calm and polite; but through that calm and that politeness appeared a certain unusual determination to oppose for that evening the wishes of his wife. The baroness was also surprised, and showed her astonishment by a look which would doubtless have had some effect upon her husband if he had not been intently occupied with the paper, where he was seeking the closing price of the funds; so that the fierce look shot at him was wholly wasted.

"M. Lucien," said the baroness, "I assure you I have no desire to sleep; that I have a thousand things to tell you this evening; and that you are going to spend the night listening to me, even though you should sleep standing."

"I am at your service, madame," replied Lucien, quietly.

"My dear M. Debray," said the banker, "do not kill yourself listening all night to the follies of Madame Danglars, for you can hear them as well to-morrow; but I claim to-night, and will devote it, if you will allow me, to talking over some serious matters with my wife."

This time the blow was so well aimed and hit so directly that Lucien and the baroness were staggered; and they interrogated each other with their eyes, as if to seek help against this aggression; but the irresistible will of the master of the house prevailed, and the husband was victorious.

"Do not think I wish to turn you out, my dear Debray," continued Danglars; "oh, no! not at all! An unexpected occurrence forces me to ask my wife to have a little conversation with me; I make such a request so seldom that I am sure you cannot think unkindly of me for it."

Debray muttered something, bowed, and went out, knocking himself against the edge of the door, like Nathan in "Athalie."

"It is extraordinary," he said, when the door was closed behind him, "how easily these husbands, whom we ridicule, gain an advantage over us."

Lucien having left, Danglars took his place on the sofa, closed the open book, and placing himself in an attitude outrageously

affected, he began playing with the dog; but the animal, not liking him so well as Debray, and attempting to bite him, Danglars seized him by the skin of his neck, and threw him to the other side of the room upon a couch. The animal uttered a cry during the transit, but arrived at its destination, it crouched behind the cushions, and stupefied at such unusual treatment, remained silent and motionless.

"Do you know, monsieur," asked the baroness, "that you are improving? Generally you are only rude; to-night you are brutal."

"It is because I am in a worse humour than usual," replied Danglars.

Hermine looked at the banker with supreme disdain. These glances ordinarily exasperated the proud Danglars; but this evening he took no notice of them.

"And what have I to do with your ill-humour?" said the baroness, irritated at the impassiveness of her husband. "Do these things concern me? Keep your ill-humour to yourself, or confine it to your offices; and since you have clerks whom you pay, vent it upon them."

"Not so," replied Danglars; "your advice is wrong, so I shall not follow it. My offices are my Pactolus, as I think M. Demoustier says; and I will not retard its course, or disturb its calm. My clerks are honest men who earn my fortune, whom I pay much below their deserts, if I may value them according to what they bring in; therefore I shall not get into a passion with them. Those with whom I will be in a passion are those who eat my dinners, mount my horses, and exhaust my fortune."

"And pray who are the persons who exhaust your fortune? Explain yourself more clearly, I beg you, monsieur."

"Oh, make yourself easy! I am not speaking riddles, and you will soon know what I mean. The people who exhaust my fortune are those who draw out seven hundred thousand livres in the course of an hour."

"I do not understand you, monsieur," said the baroness, trying to disguise the agitation of her voice and the flush of her face.

"You understand me very well, on the contrary," said Danglars; "but if you will persist, I will tell you that I have just lost seven hundred thousand livres upon the Spanish loan."

"Ah, indeed!" said the baroness, with a sneer; "and you hold me responsible for that loss?"

"Why not?"

"Is it my fault that you have lost seven hundred thousand livres?"

"Certainly it is not mine."

"Once for all, monsieur," replied the baroness, sharply, "I have told you never to talk money to me; it is a language that I never heard in the house of my parents or in that of my first husband."

"Oh! I can well believe that, for neither of them was worth a penny."

"The better reason for my not being conversant with the slang of the bank, which is here dinning in my ears from morning to night; that noise of jingling crowns which are counted and recounted is odious to me. I know only one sound which is more disagreeable to me, and that is the sound of your voice."

"Really!" said Danglars. "Well, this surprises me, for I thought you took the liveliest interest in my affairs!"

"I! What could put such an idea into your head?"

"Yourself!"

"Ah! indeed!"

"Most assuredly."

"I should like to know upon what occasion?"

"Ah, that is very easily done! Last February you were the first who told me of the Haytian funds. You had dreamed that a ship had entered the harbour at Havre; that this ship brought news that a payment we had looked upon as lost was going to be made. I know how clear-sighted your dreams are; I therefore purchased immediately as many shares as I could of the Haytian debt, and I gained four hundred thousand livres by it, of which one hundred thousand have been honestly paid to you. You spent it as you pleased,—that was your business. In March there was a question about a grant to a railway. Three companies presented themselves, each offering equal securities. You told me that your instinct,—and although you pretend to know nothing about speculations, I think, on the contrary, that your instinct is well developed in regard to certain affairs,—well, you told me that your instinct led you to believe the grant would be given to the company called the Southern. I bought two-thirds of the shares of that company; as you had foreseen, the shares became of triple value, and I picked up a million, from which two hundred and fifty thousand livres were paid to you for pin-money. How have you spent this two hundred and fifty thousand livres?"

"When are you coming to the point?" cried the baroness, shivering with anger and impatience.

"Patience, madame! I am coming to it."

"That's fortunate!"

"In April you went to dine at the minister's. You heard a private conversation respecting the affairs of Spain,—the expulsion of Don Carlos. I bought some Spanish shares. The expulsion took place; and I pocketed six hundred thousand livres the day Charles V. repassed the Bidassoa. Of these six hundred thousand livres you took fifty thousand crowns. They were yours; you disposed of them according to your fancy, and I asked no questions. But it is not the less true that you have this year received five hundred thousand livres."

"Well, monsieur, what next?"

"Ah, yes, what next? Well, right on the heels of that, the whole thing is muddled."

"Really, your manner of speaking—"

"It expresses my meaning, and that is all I want. Well, three days after that you talk politics with M. Debray, and you fancy from his words that Don Carlos has returned to Spain. Then I sell my shares; the news spreads, a panic ensues, and I no longer sell but give them. Next day it appears that the news was false, and that by this false news I have lost seven hundred thousand livres."

"Well?"

"Well! since I gave you a fourth of my gains, I think you owe me a fourth of my losses; the fourth of seven hundred thousand livres is one hundred and seventy-five thousand livres."

"What you say is absurd, and I cannot see why M. Debray's name is mixed up in this affair."

"Because if you do not possess the one hundred and seventy-five thousand livres which I reclaim, you must have lent them to your friends; and M. Debray is one of your friends."

"For shame!" exclaimed the baroness.

"Oh! let us have no gestures, no screams, no modern drama, madame, or you will oblige me to tell you that I see from here Debray laughing over the five hundred thousand livres which you have counted out to him this year, and saying to himself that he has found what the most skilful gamblers have never discovered,—a game in which one wins without putting up money, and loses without loss."

The baroness became enraged. "Wretch!" she cried; "will you dare to tell me you did not know that with which you now reproach me?"

"I do not say that I did know it; and I do not say that I did not know it. I merely tell you to look into my conduct during

the last four years since we ceased to be husband and wife, and see whether it has not always been consistent. Some time after our rupture you wished to study music under the celebrated baritone who made such a successful *début* at the Théâtre Italien; at the same time I felt inclined to learn dancing of the *danseuse* who acquired such a reputation in London. This cost me on your account and mine, one hundred thousand livres. I said nothing, for we must have peace in the house; and one hundred thousand livres for a lady and gentleman to be properly instructed in music and dancing are not too much. Well, you soon become tired of singing, and you take a fancy to study diplomacy with the minister's secretary. I allow you to study. You understand, —what is it to me so long as you pay for your lessons out of your own cash-box? But to-day I find you are drawing on mine, and that your apprenticeship may cost me seven hundred thousand livres per month. Stop there, madame! for this cannot go on. Either the diplomatist must give his lessons gratis, and I will tolerate him, or he must never set his foot again in my house,—do you understand, madame?"

"Oh, this is too much, monsieur," cried Hermine, choking; "you go beyond the bounds of vulgarity."

"But," continued Danglars, "I see with pleasure that you have not remained on this side of them, and that you have voluntarily complied with the maxim of the code, 'the wife follows her husband.'"

"Insults!"

"You are right; let us establish our facts, and reason coolly. I have never interfered in your affairs, excepting for your good; treat me in the same way. You say you have nothing to do with my cash-box. Be it so. Do as you like with your own, but do not fill or empty mine. Besides, how do I know that this was not a political trick; that the minister, enraged at seeing me in the opposition, and jealous of the popular sympathy I excite, has not concerted with M. Debray to ruin me?"

"How probable that is!"

"Why not? Who ever heard of such a thing?—a false telegraphic despatch! that borders on the impossible. Signals totally different given in the last two telegrams! It was done on purpose for me, I am sure of it."

"Monsieur," said the baroness, humbly, "you seem not to be aware that that employee has been discharged; that they even intended to bring him into court; that orders were issued to arrest him; and that this order would have been put into execution if he had not escaped the first search by flight, which

proves either his madness or his culpability. It was a mistake."

"Yes, which made fools laugh; which made the minister have a sleepless night; which made the minister's secretaries blacken several sheets of paper; but which cost me seven hundred thousand livres."

"But, monsieur," said Hermine, suddenly, "if all this is, as you say, caused by M. Debray, why, instead of going direct to him, do you come and tell me of it? Why to accuse the man do you address the woman?"

"Do I know M. Debray; do I wish to know him; do I wish to know that he gives advice; do I wish to follow it; do I speculate? No; it is you who do all this, not I."

"Still it seems to me that as you profit by it—"

Danglars shrugged his shoulders. "Foolish creatures," he exclaimed, "are the women who fancy they have talent because they have managed two or three intrigues without being the talk of Paris! But know that if you had even hidden your irregularities from your husband, which is but the commencement of the art,—for generally husbands do not wish to see,—you would then have been but a faint imitation of half your friends among the women of the world. But it has not been so with me,—I see, and always have seen. During the last sixteen years, you may perhaps have hidden a thought; but not a step, not an action, not a fault has escaped me, while you flattered yourself upon your address, and firmly believed you had deceived me. What has been the result? That, thanks to my pretended ignorance, there are none of your friends, from M. de Villefort to M. Debray, who have not trembled before me. There is not one who has not treated me as the master of the house,—the only title I desire with respect to you; there is not one, in fact, who would have dared to speak of me as I have spoken of them this day. I will allow you to make me hateful; but I will prevent your rendering me ridiculous, and, above all, I forbid you to ruin me."

The baroness had been tolerably composed until the name of Villefort had been pronounced; but then she became pale, and rising as if moved by a spring, she stretched out her hands like one who seeks to exorcise an apparition. She then took two or three steps towards her husband, as if to tear the secret from him of which he was ignorant, or which perhaps in pursuance of some scheme, odious, like all his schemes, he was unwilling wholly to disclose. "M. de Villefort! what do you mean?"

"I mean that M. de Nargonne, your first husband, being neither a philosopher nor a banker, or perhaps being both, and

seeing there was nothing to be got out of a *procureur du roi*, died of grief or anger at finding, after an absence of nine months, that you had been *enceinte* six. I am brutal,—I not only allow it, but boast of it; it is one of the reasons of my success in commercial business. Why did he kill himself instead of you? Because he had no cash to save. My life belongs to my cash. M. Debray has made me lose seven hundred thousand livres; let him bear his share of the loss, and we will go on as before. If not, let him become bankrupt for the one hundred and seventy thousand livres, and do as all bankrupts do,—disappear. He is a charming fellow, I allow, when his news is correct; but when it is not, there are fifty others in the world who would do better than he."

Madame Danglars was rooted to the spot; however, she made a violent effort to reply to this last attack. She fell upon a chair, thinking of Villefort, of the dinner scene, of the strange series of misfortunes which had taken place in her house during the last few days and had transformed her quiet establishment into a scene of scandalous discussions. Danglars did not even look at her, though she tried all she could to faint. He shut the bedroom door after him without adding another word, and returned to his apartments; and when Madame Danglars recovered from her half-fainting condition, she could almost believe she had had a disagreeable dream.

CHAPTER LXVI

MATRIMONIAL PROJECTS

THE day following this scene, at the hour which Debray usually chose to pay a visit to Madame Danglars on his way to his office, his coupé did not appear in the court. At that hour,—that is, about half-past twelve,—Madame Danglars ordered her carriage and went out. Danglars, placed behind a curtain, watched the departure he had been waiting for. He gave orders that he should be informed when Madame Danglars reappeared; but at two o'clock she had not returned. He then called for his horses, drove to the Chamber, and inscribed his name to speak against the budget. From twelve to two o'clock he had remained in his study, unsealing his despatches, and becoming more and more sad every minute, heaping figure upon figure, and receiving, among other visits, one from Major Cavalcanti, who, as stiff and as exact as ever, presented himself precisely at

the hour named the night before, to terminate his business with the banker. On leaving the Chamber, Danglars, who had shown violent marks of agitation during the sitting, and had been more bitter than ever against the ministry, re-entered his carriage, and told the coachman to drive to the Avenue des Champs Elysées, No. 30.

Monte Cristo was at home; but he was engaged with some one, and begged Danglars to wait for a moment in the drawing-room. While the banker was waiting, the door opened, and a man dressed as an abbé entered, who, doubtless more familiar with the house than he was, instead of waiting merely bowed, and passing on to the inner apartments, disappeared. A minute after, the door by which the priest had entered reopened, and Monte Cristo appeared. "Pardon me," said he, "my dear baron, but one of my friends, the Abbé Busoni, whom you perhaps saw pass by, has just arrived in Paris; not having seen him for a long time, I could not make up my mind to leave him sooner. I hope you will find this a sufficient excuse for my having made you wait."

"Nay," said Danglars, "it is my fault; I have chosen a wrong time for my visit, and will retire."

"Not at all; on the contrary, be seated. But what is the matter with you? you look careworn. Really you alarm me! For a capitalist to be sad presages, like the appearance of a comet, some misfortune to the world."

"I have been in ill-luck for several days," said Danglars; "and I have heard nothing but bad news."

"Ah, indeed!" said Monte Cristo. "Have you had another fall at the Bourse?"

"No; I am cured of that for some days at least. My trouble now arises from a bankruptcy at Trieste."

"Really! Does your bankrupt happen to be Jacopo Manfredi?"

"Exactly so. Imagine a man who has transacted business with me for I do not know how long, to the amount of eight hundred thousand or nine hundred thousand livres per year. Never a mistake or delay,—a fellow who paid like a prince. Well, I was a million in advance with him, and now my fine Jacopo Manfredi suspends payment!"

"Really?"

"It is an unheard of fatality. I draw upon him for six hundred thousand livres, my bills are returned unpaid; and more than that, I hold bills of exchange signed by him to the value of four hundred thousand livres, payable at his corre-

spondent's in Paris at the end of this month. To-day is the 30th. I send to him for payment; and behold, the correspondent has disappeared! This, with my Spanish affairs, makes a pretty end to the month for me."

"Then you really lost by that affair in Spain?"

"Yes; seven hundred thousand livres out of my cash box,—only that!"

"Why, how could you make such a mistake,—an old lynx like you?"

"Oh, it is my wife's fault. She dreamed Don Carlos had returned to Spain; she believes in dreams. It is magnetism, she says; and when she dreams a thing it is sure to happen, she assures me. On this conviction I allow her to speculate. She has her bank and her stock-broker; she speculates and she loses. It is true she speculates with her own money, not mine; nevertheless, you can understand that when seven hundred thousand livres leave the wife's pocket the husband always finds it out. But do you mean to say you have not heard of this? Why, the thing has made a tremendous noise!"

"Yes, I heard it spoken of, but I did not know the details; and then no one can be more ignorant than I am of the affairs in the Bourse."

"Then you do not speculate?"

"I? How could I speculate when I already have so much trouble in regulating my income? I should be obliged, besides my steward, to keep a clerk and a boy. But touching these Spanish affairs, I think the baroness did not altogether dream that story of Don Carlos's return. The papers said something about it, did they not?"

"Then you believe the newspapers?"

"I?—not the least in the world; only I fancied that the honest *Messager* was an exception to the rule, and that it announced genuine news,—telegraphic news."

"Well! this is what puzzles me," replied Danglars; "the news of the return of Don Carlos was in fact telegraphic news."

"So that," said Monte Cristo, "you have lost nearly one million seven hundred thousand livres this month."

"Not nearly, indeed; that is exactly my loss."

"*Diable!*" said Monte Cristo, compassionately, "it is a hard blow for a third-rate fortune."

"Third-rate," said Danglars, rather humbled, "what do you mean by that?"

"Certainly," continued Monte Cristo; "I classify fortunes in three grades,—first-rate, second-rate, and third-rate fortunes.

I call those first-rate which are composed of treasures one possesses under one's hand, such as mines, lands, and funded property, in such states as France, Austria, and England, provided these treasures and property form a total of about a hundred millions. I call those second-rate fortunes gained by manufacturing enterprises, joint-stock companies, viceroyalties, and principalities, not yielding an income of more than one million five hundred thousand livres, and constituting in all a capital of about fifty millions. Finally, I call those third-rate fortunes which consist of a capital accumulated in diverse enterprises, depending for increase upon the will of others or upon chance, which a bankruptcy can impair, and a telegraphic despatch can throw into disorder,—fortunes, in short, resting on speculations and operations that are subject to that fatality which may be compared to nature's forces as the smaller to the greater; the whole forming a capital, fictitious or real, of about fifteen millions. I think this is about your position, is it not?"

"Confound it! yes!" replied Danglars.

"The result, then, of six more such months as this," continued Monte Cristo, quietly, "would be to reduce a third-rate house to despair."

"Oh!" said Danglars, becoming very pale, "how you are running on!"

"Let us imagine seven such months," continued Monte Cristo, in the same tone. "Tell me, have you ever thought that seven times one million seven hundred thousand livres make about twelve millions? No? well, you are right, for if you indulged in such reflections you would never risk your principal, which is to the speculator what the skin is to civilised man. We have our clothes, some more splendid than others,—this is our credit; but when a man dies, he has only his skin. In the same way, on retiring from business, you have nothing but your real principal of about five or six millions at the most; for third-rate fortunes are never more than a fourth of what they appear to be,—like the locomotive on a railway, the size of which is magnified by the smoke and steam surrounding it. Well, out of the five or six millions which form your real capital you have just lost nearly two millions, which must of course in the same degree diminish your credit and fictitious fortune; to follow out my simile, your skin has been opened by bleeding, which, repeated three or four times, will cause death. Ah! you must give your attention to it, my dear M. Danglars. Do you want money? Do you wish me to lend you some?"

"What a bad calculator you are!" exclaimed Danglars, calling to his assistance all his philosophy and dissimulation. "I have made money at the same time by speculations which have succeeded. I have made up for the loss of blood by nutrition. I lost a battle in Spain, I have been defeated in Trieste; but my naval army in India will have taken some galleons, and my Mexican pioneers will have discovered some mine."

"Very good! very good! But the wound remains, and will reopen at the first loss."

"No! for I am embarked only in certainties," replied Danglars, with the cheap eloquence of a charlatan bolstering up his credit; "to overturn me three governments must fall."

"Well; such things have been!"

"The earth must withhold its harvests!"

"Recollect the seven fat and the seven lean kine."

"Or the sea must withdraw itself, as in the days of Pharaoh. There are still many seas remaining; and in an emergency of that kind the vessels might be turned into caravans."

"So much the better! I congratulate you, my dear M. Danglars," said Monte Cristo. "I see I was deceived, and that you rank among those whose fortunes are of the second grade."

"I think I may aspire to that honour," said Danglars, with a smile, which reminded Monte Cristo of one of those sickly moons which bad artists are so fond of daubing into their pictures of ruins; "but while we are speaking of business," he added, pleased to find an opportunity of changing the subject, "tell me what I am to do for M. Cavalcanti."

"Give him money, if he has letters of credit to you which appear to be trustworthy."

"Excellent! he presented himself this morning with a draft on you for forty thousand livres, payable at sight, signed by Busoni, and sent by you to me with your indorsement; of course, I immediately counted him over the forty bank-notes."

Monte Cristo nodded his head in token of assent.

"But that is not all," continued Danglars; "he has opened an account with my house for his son."

"May I ask how much he allows the young man?"

"Five thousand livres per month."

"Sixty thousand livres per year. I suspected that Cavalcanti to be a stingy fellow. How can a young man live upon five thousand livres a month?"

"But you understand that if the young man should want a few thousands more—"

"Do not advance it; the father will never repay it. You do not know these ultramontane millionaires; they are regular misers. And by whom is that credit opened?"

"Oh, by the house of Fenzi, one of the best in Florence."

"I do not mean to say you will lose, but nevertheless mind you hold to the terms of the letter."

"Have you, then, no confidence in this Cavalcanti?"

"I? oh, I would advance six millions on his signature. I was only speaking in reference to the second-rate fortunes we were mentioning just now."

"And with all this, how plain he is! I never should have taken him for anything more than a mere major."

"And you would have flattered him, for certainly, as you say, he has no manner. The first time I saw him he appeared to me like an old lieutenant who had grown mouldy beneath his epaulette. But all the Italians are the same; they are like old Jews when they are not glittering like the magi of the East."

"The young man is better," said Danglars.

"Yes; a little nervous perhaps, but upon the whole he appeared very well. I was uneasy about him."

"Why?"

"Because when you met him at my house he had but just made his entrance in the social world, as they told me. He has been travelling with a very severe tutor, and had never been to Paris before."

"All these Italians of rank marry among themselves, do they not?" asked Danglars, carelessly; "they like to unite their fortunes."

"It is usual, certainly; but Cavalcanti is an original who does nothing like other people. I cannot help thinking he has brought his son to France to choose a wife."

"Do you think so?"

"I am sure of it."

"And you have heard his fortune mentioned?"

"Nothing else was talked of; only some said he was worth millions, and others that he did not possess a farthing."

"And what is your opinion?"

"I ought not to influence you, because it is only my own personal impression."

"Well; and it is that—"

"My opinion is that all these old *podestats*, these ancient *condottieri*,—for the Cavalcanti have commanded armies and governed provinces,—my opinion, I say, is that they have buried their millions in corners, the secret of which they have only

transmitted to their eldest sons, who have done the same from generation to generation; and the proof is that they are all yellow and dry, like the florins of the republic, a reflected likeness of which they acquire by dint of looking at them."

"Certainly," said Danglars, "and this is further supported by the fact of their not possessing an inch of land."

"Very little at least; I know of none which Cavalcanti possesses except his palace in Lucca."

"Ah! he has a palace?" said Danglars, laughing; "come, that is something."

"Yes; and more than that, he lets it to the Minister of Finance, while he lives in a simple house. Oh! as I told you before, I think the good man is very close!"

"Come, you do not flatter him."

"I scarcely know him; I think I have seen him three times in my life. All I know relating to him is through the Abbé Busoni and himself; the abbé was speaking to me this morning of Cavalcanti's plans in regard to his son, and gave me to understand that Cavalcanti, tired of letting his property lie dormant in Italy, which is a dead nation, wished to find a method, either in France or England, of multiplying his millions. But remember that though I place great confidence in the Abbé Busoni, personally I am not responsible for this."

"Never mind; accept my thanks for the client you have sent me. It is a fine name to inscribe on my lists; and my cashier was quite proud of it when I explained to him who the Cavalcanti were. By the way,—a question in passing,—when men of that sort marry their sons, do they give them any fortune?"

"Oh, that depends upon circumstances. I know an Italian prince, rich as a gold mine, one of the noblest families in Tuscany, who, when his sons married according to his wish, gave them millions; and when they married against his consent, allowed them only thirty crowns a month. Should Andrea marry according to his father's views, he will perhaps give him one, two, or three millions. For example, supposing it were the daughter of a banker, he might take an interest in the house of the father-in-law of his son. Then again, if the proposed daughter-in-law is displeasing to him,—good-by; Father Cavalcanti takes the key, double-locks his coffer, and M. Andrea is obliged to live like the son of a Parisian family, by shuffling cards or rattling the dice."

"Ah! that boy will find out some Bavarian or Peruvian princess; he will want a crown and an immense fortune."

"No, these grand lords on the other side of the Alps fre-

quently marry into plain families; like Jupiter, they like to cross the race. But do you wish to marry Andrea, my dear M. Danglars, that you are asking so many questions?"

"Upon my word!" said Danglars, "it would not be a bad speculation, I fancy; and you know I am a speculator."

"You are not thinking of Mademoiselle Danglars, I hope; you would not like poor Andrea to have his throat cut by Albert?"

"Albert!" repeated Danglars, shrugging his shoulders; "ah, yes; he would care very little about it, I think."

"But he is betrothed to your daughter, I believe?"

"Certainly, M. de Morcerf and I have talked about this marriage; but Madame de Morcerf and Albert—"

"You do not mean to say that it would not be a good match?"

"Indeed, I imagine that Mademoiselle Danglars is as good as M. de Morcerf."

"Mademoiselle Danglars's fortune will be great, no doubt, especially if the telegraph should not make any more mistakes."

"Oh! I do not mean her fortune only; but tell me—"

"What?"

"Why did you not invite Morcerf and his family to your dinner?"

"I did so; but he excused himself on account of Madame de Morcerf being obliged to go to Dieppe for the benefit of sea air."

"Yes, yes," said Danglars, laughing; "it would do her a great deal of good."

"Why so?"

"Because it is the air that she breathed in her youth." Monte Cristo let the epigram pass without appearing to notice it.

"But still, if Albert be not so rich as Mademoiselle Danglars," said the count, "you must allow that he has a good name?"

"So he has; but I like mine as well."

"Certainly, your name is popular, and does honour to the title they have bestowed upon you; but you are too intelligent not to know that according to a prejudice too firmly rooted to be exterminated, a nobility which dates back five centuries is worth more than one that can reckon only twenty years."

"And for this very reason," said Danglars, with a smile which he tried to make sardonic, "I prefer M. Andrea Cavalcanti to M. Albert de Morcerf."

"Still, I should not think the Morcerfs would yield to the Cavalcanti."

"The Morcerfs! Stay, my dear count," said Danglars; "you are a clever man, are you not?"

"I think so."

"And you understand heraldry?"

"A little."

"Well, look at my coat-of-arms, it is worth more than Morcerf's."

"Why so?"

"Because, though I am not a baron by birth, my real name is at least Danglars."

"Well, what then?"

"While his name is not Morcerf."

"How—not Morcerf?"

"Not the least in the world."

"Oh, come now!"

"I have been made a baron, so that I actually am one; he made himself a count, so that he is not one at all."

"Impossible!"

"Listen, my dear count, M. de Morcerf has been my friend, or rather my acquaintance, during the last thirty years. You know I have made the most of my arms, though I never forgot my origin."

"A proof of great humility or great pride," said Monte Cristo.

"Well, when I was a clerk, Morcerf was a mere fisherman."

"And then he was called—"

"Fernand."

"Only Fernand?"

"Fernand Mondego."

"You are sure?"

"I should think so! I have bought enough fish of him to know his name."

"Then why did you think of giving your daughter to him?"

"Because Fernand and Danglars, being both *parvenus*, both having become noble, both rich, are about equal in worth, excepting that there have been certain things mentioned of him that were never said of me."

"What are they?"

"Oh, nothing!"

"Ah, yes! what you tell me recalls to mind something about the name of Fernand Mondego. I have heard that name in Greece."

"In conjunction with the affairs of Ali Pacha?"

"Exactly so."

"This is the mystery," said Danglars; "I acknowledge I would have given anything to find it out."

"It would be very easy if you much wished it."

"How so?"

"Probably you have some correspondent in Greece?"

"Of course I have."

"At Janina?"

"Everywhere."

"Well, write to your correspondent in Janina, and ask him what part was played by a Frenchman named Fernand Mondego in the catastrophe of Ali Tebelin."

"You are right," exclaimed Danglars, rising quickly; "I will write to-day."

"Do so."

"I will do it."

"And if you should hear of anything very scandalous indeed—"

"I will communicate it to you."

"You will oblige me." Danglars rushed out of the room, and made but one bound into his carriage.

CHAPTER LXVII

THE OFFICE OF THE PROCUREUR DU ROI

LET us leave the banker driving his horses at their fullest speed, and follow Madame Danglars in her morning excursion. We have said that at half-past twelve o'clock Madame Danglars had ordered her horses, and had left home in the carriage. She directed her course towards the Faubourg St. Germain, went down the Rue Mazarine, and stopped at the Passage du Pont Neuf. She descended, and crossed the passage. She was very plainly dressed, as would be the case with a woman of taste going out in the morning. At the Rue Guénégaud she called a *fiacre,* and gave as her destination the Rue du Harlay. As soon as she was seated in the coach, she drew from her pocket a very thick black veil, which she tied on to her straw hat. She then replaced the hat, and saw with pleasure, in a little pocket-mirror, that her white complexion and brilliant eyes were alone visible. The *fiacre* crossed the Pont Neuf and entered the Rue du Harlay by the Place Dauphine. The driver was paid as the door opened, and stepping lightly up the stairs, Madame Danglars soon reached the hall of the Pas Perdus.

There was a great deal going on that morning, and many busy persons were at the Palais. Busy persons pay very little attention to women; and Madame Danglars crossed the hall without exciting any more attention than would any other woman calling upon her lawyer. There was a great press of people in M. de Villefort's ante-chamber; but Madame Danglars had no occasion even to pronounce her name. The instant she appeared, the door-keeper rose, came to her, and asked her whether she was not the person with whom the *procureur du roi* had made an appointment; and on her affirmative answer being given, he conducted her by a private passage to M. de Villefort's office. The magistrate was seated in an armchair, writing, with his back towards the door; he heard it open, and the door-keeper pronounce the words, "Walk in, madame," and then reclose it, and did not move; but no sooner had the man's footsteps ceased than he started up, drew the bolts, closed the curtains, and examined every corner of the room. Then, when he had assured himself that he could neither be seen nor heard, and was relieved of that anxiety, he said, "Thanks, madame,—thanks for your punctuality;" and he offered a chair to Madame Danglars, which she accepted, for her heart beat so violently that she felt nearly suffocated.

"It is a long time, madame," said the *procureur du roi*, describing a half-circle with his chair, so as to place himself exactly opposite to Madame Danglars,—"it is a long time since I had the pleasure of speaking alone with you; and I regret that we have now met only to enter upon a painful conversation."

"Nevertheless, monsieur, you see I have answered your first appeal; although certainly the conversation must be much more painful for me than for you."

Villefort smiled bitterly. "It is true, then," he said, rather uttering his thoughts aloud than addressing his companion,—"it is true, then, that all our actions leave their traces—some sad, others bright—on our paths! It is then true that every step in our lives resembles the course of an insect on the sand,—it leaves its track! Alas! to many the path is traced by tears."

"Monsieur," said Madame Danglars, "you can feel for my emotion, can you not? Spare me, then, I beseech you! When I look at this room, whence so many guilty creatures have departed trembling and ashamed; when I look at that chair before which I now sit trembling and ashamed,—oh! it requires all my reason to convince me that I am not a very guilty woman and you a menacing judge."

Villefort dropped his head and sighed. "And I," he said, "I feel that my place is not in the judge's seat, but on the prisoner's stool."

"You?" said Madame Danglars, astonished.

"Yes, I."

"I think, monsieur, that your puritanism exaggerates the situation," said Madame Danglars, whose beautiful eyes sparkled for a moment. "The paths of which you were just speaking have been traced by all young men of ardent imaginations. Besides the pleasure there is in the indulgence of our passions, there is always a little remorse; and for that reason the gospel, that eternal resource of the unhappy, has given us for our comfort—us poor women—the admirable parable of the adulterous woman. And so, I declare to you, in recalling those transports of my younger days, I think sometimes that God has forgiven them; for a compensation if not an excuse for them may be found in my sufferings. But you,—what have you to apprehend from all that,—you men, whom all the world excuses, and whom scandal ennobles?"

"Madame," replied Villefort, "you know that I am no hypocrite, or at least that I never deceive without a reason. If my brow be severe, it is because many misfortunes have clouded it; if my heart be petrified, it is that it might sustain the blows it has received. I was not so in my youth; I was not so on the night of the betrothal, when we were all seated round a table in the Rue du Cours at Marseilles. But since then everything has changed in and about me; I am accustomed to brave difficulties, and in the conflict to crush those who by their own free will or by chance, voluntarily or involuntarily, interfere with me in my career. It is generally the case that what we most ardently desire is as ardently withheld from us by those from whom we wish to obtain it, or from whom we attempt to snatch it. Thus, the greater number of a man's errors come before him disguised under the specious form of necessity; then after error has been committed in a moment of excitement, of delirium, or of fear, we see that we might have avoided and escaped it. The means we might have used, which we in our blindness could not see, then seem simple and easy, and we say, 'Why did I not do this, instead of that?' Women, on the contrary, are rarely tormented with remorse,—for the decision does not come from you; your misfortunes are generally imposed upon you, and your faults are almost always the crimes of others."

"In any case, monsieur, you will allow," replied Madame

Danglars, "that even if the fault were mine alone, I last night received a severe punishment for it."

"Poor woman!" said Villefort, pressing her hand, "it was too severe for your strength, for you were twice overwhelmed; and yet—"

"Well?"

"Well, I must tell you. Collect all your courage, for you have not yet reached the end!"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Madame Danglars, alarmed, "what is there still remaining?"

"You only look back to the past; and it is indeed bad enough. Well, picture to yourself a future more gloomy still,—certainly frightful, perhaps sanguinary!"

The baroness knew how calm Villefort naturally was, and his present excitement frightened her so much that she opened her mouth to scream, but the sound died in her throat.

"How has this terrible past been recalled?" cried Villefort; "how is it that it has escaped from the depths of the tomb and the recesses of our hearts, where it was buried, to visit us now, like a phantom, whitening our cheeks and flushing our brows with shame?"

"Alas!" said Hermine, "doubtless it is chance!"

"Chance!" replied Villefort; "no, no, madame, there is no such thing as chance!"

"Oh, yes; is it not chance that has done all this? Was it not by chance that the Count of Monte Cristo bought this house? Was it not by chance that he caused the earth to be dug? Is it not by chance that the unfortunate child was disinterred under the trees?—that poor innocent offspring of mine, which I never even kissed, but for whom I wept many, many tears! Ah, my heart clung to the count when he mentioned the dear remains found beneath the flowers."

"Well, no, madame! this is the terrible news I have to tell you," said Villefort, in a hollow voice. "No, nothing was found beneath the flowers; there was no child disinterred. No, you must not weep, you must not groan; you must tremble!"

"What can you mean?" asked Madame Danglars, shuddering.

"I mean that M. de Monte Cristo, digging underneath these trees, found neither skeleton nor chest, because neither of them was there!"

"Neither of them there!" repeated Madame Danglars, fixing upon him her eyes, which by their fearful dilatation indicated how much she was alarmed. "Neither of them there!" she again said, like a person who endeavours by the utterance of

words and the sound of the voice, to keep fast hold of ideas that are ready to escape.

"No!" said Villefort, burying his face in his hands, "no! a hundred times no!"

"Then you did not bury the poor child there, monsieur? Why did you deceive me,—with what purpose? Come, speak!"

"I buried it there! But listen to me—listen—and you will pity one who has for twenty years alone borne the heavy burden of grief I am about to reveal, without casting the least portion upon you."

"My God, you frighten me! But speak; I will listen."

"You recollect that sad night, when you were half-expiring on that bed in the red damask room, while I, scarcely less agitated than you, awaited your delivery. The child was born, was given to me, without movement, without breath, without voice; we thought it dead." Madame Danglars made a startled movement, as though she would spring from her chair; but Villefort stopped her, clasping his hands as if to implore her attention. "We thought it dead," he repeated. "I placed it in the chest, which was to take the place of a coffin; I descended to the garden; I dug a hole, and hastily buried the chest. Scarcely had I covered it with mould, when the arm of the Corsican was stretched towards me; I saw a shadow rise, and at the same time a flash of light. I felt pain; I wished to cry out, but an icy shiver ran through my veins and stifled my voice; I fell lifeless, and fancied myself killed. Never shall I forget your sublime courage, when, having returned to consciousness, I dragged myself, expiring, to the foot of the stairs, where, expiring yourself, you came to meet me. We were obliged to keep silent upon the dreadful catastrophe. You had the fortitude to regain your house, assisted by your nurse. A duel was the pretext for my wound. Though we scarcely expected it, our secret remained in our own keeping alone. I was taken to Versailles; for three months I struggled with death. At last, as I seemed to cling to life, I was ordered to the South. Four men carried me from Paris to Châlons, walking six leagues a day. Madame de Villefort followed the litter in her carriage. At Châlons I was put upon the Saone, thence I passed on to the Rhone, and drifted on the current down to Arles; at Arles I was again placed on my litter, and continued my journey to Marseilles. My convalescence lasted six months. I never heard you mentioned, and I did not dare inquire for you. When I returned to Paris, I learned that, widow of M. de Nargonne, you had married M. Danglars.

"What had been the subject of my thoughts ever since consciousness had returned to me? Always the same,—always the child's corpse, which every night in my dreams, rising from the earth, hovered above the grave with a menacing look and gesture. Immediately on my return to Paris I made inquiries; the house had not been inhabited since we left it, but it had just been let for nine years. I found the tenant. I pretended that I disliked the idea of a house belonging to my wife's father and mother passing into the hands of strangers. I offered to pay them for yielding up the lease; they demanded six thousand livres. I would have given ten thousand; I would have given twenty thousand. I had the money with me; I made the tenant sign the cancelling deed, and when I had obtained what I so much wanted, I galloped to Auteuil. No one had entered the house since I had left it. It was five o'clock in the afternoon; I ascended into the red room and waited for night. There all the thoughts which had disturbed me during my year of constant agony occurred with double force. The Corsican, who had declared the *vendetta* against me, who had followed me from Nîmes to Paris, who had hid himself in the garden, who had struck me, had seen me dig the grave, had seen me inter the child; he might become acquainted with your person,—nay, he might even then have known it. Would he not one day make you pay for keeping this terrible secret? Would it not be a sweet revenge for him when he found I had not died from the blow of his dagger? It was therefore necessary before everything else, and at all risks, that I should cause all traces of the past to disappear,—that I should destroy every material vestige; too much reality would always remain in my recollection. It was for this I had annulled the lease; it was for this I had come; it was for this I was waiting. Night arrived; I waited until it was quite dark. I was without a light in that room; when the wind shook all the doors, behind which I continually expected to see some concealed spy, I trembled. I seemed everywhere to hear your moans behind me in the bed, and I dared not turn round. My heart beat so violently that I feared my wound would open. At length, one by one, all the varied noises of the neighbourhood ceased. I understood that I had nothing to fear, that I should neither be seen nor heard; so I decided upon descending to the garden.

"Listen, Hermine! I consider myself as brave as most men, but when I drew from my breast the little key of the staircase, which I had found in my coat,—that little key we both used to cherish so much, which you wished to have fastened to a

golden ring; when I opened the door and saw the pale moon shedding a long stream of white light on the spiral staircase like a spectre,—I leaned against the wall and nearly shrieked. I seemed to be going mad. At last I mastered my agitation. I descended the staircase step by step; the only thing I could not conquer was a strange trembling in my knees. I grasped the railings; if I had relaxed my hold for a moment, I should have fallen. I reached the lower door. Outside this door a spade was placed against the wall; I took it and advanced towards the thicket. I had provided myself with a dark lantern. In the middle of the lawn I stopped to light it, then I continued on my course.

"It was the end of November. All the freshness of the garden had disappeared; and the trees were nothing more than skeletons with long bony arms, and the dead leaves sounded on the gravel under my feet. My terror overcame me to such a degree as I approached the thicket that I took a pistol from my pocket and armed myself. I fancied continually that I saw the figure of the Corsican between the branches. I examined the thicket with my dark lantern; it was empty. I threw searching glances in all directions; I was indeed alone. No noise disturbed the silence of the night but the plaint of the owl, whose sharp weird cry seemed like a call to the phantoms of the night. I tied my lantern to a forked branch which I had noticed a year before at the precise spot where I stopped to dig the hole. The grass had grown very thick there during the summer, and when autumn arrived no one had been there to mow it. Still, one place less covered attracted my attention; it evidently was where I had turned up the ground. I addressed myself to the work. The hour, then, for which I had been waiting during the last year had at length arrived. How I worked, how I hoped, how I sounded every piece of turf, thinking to find some resistance to my spade! But no, I found nothing, though I made a hole twice as large as the first. I thought I had been deceived,—had mistaken the spot. I turned round, I looked at the trees, I tried to recall the details which had struck me at the time. A cold sharp wind whistled through the leafless branches, and yet drops of perspiration fell from my forehead. I recollected that I was stabbed just as I was trampling the ground to fill up the hole. While doing so I had leaned against a false ebony-tree. Behind me was an artificial rock intended to serve as a resting-place for persons walking in the garden. In falling, my hand, relaxing its hold of the tree, had felt the coldness of this stone. On my right I saw the tree; behind me

the rock. I stood in the same attitude, and threw myself down. I rose, and again began digging and enlarging the hole; still I found nothing, nothing,—the chest was not there!"

"The chest not there!" murmured Madame Danglars, choking with fear.

"Do not think that I contented myself with this one effort," continued Villefort. "No; I searched the whole thicket. I thought that perhaps the assassin, having discovered the chest, and supposing it to be a treasure, had intended carrying it off, but perceiving his error, had dug another hole and deposited it; but there was nothing. Then the idea struck me that he had not taken these precautions, and had simply thrown it in a corner. In that case I must wait for daylight to make my research. I regained the room and waited."

"Oh, Heaven!"

"When daylight dawned I went down again. My first visit was to the thicket. I hoped to find some traces which had escaped me in the dark. I had turned up the earth over a surface of more than twenty feet square, and to a depth of more than two feet. A labourer would not have done in a day what I had done in an hour. But I could find nothing,—absolutely nothing. Then I searched for the chest on the supposition that it had been thrown into some corner. That would probably be on the path which led to the little gate; but this examination was as useless as the first, and with a bursting heart I returned to the thicket, which now contained no hope for me."

"Oh," cried Madame Danglars, "it was enough to drive you mad!"

"I hoped for a moment that it might," said Villefort; "but that good fortune was denied me. However, recovering my strength and my ideas, 'Why,' said I, 'should that man have carried away the corpse?'"

"But you said," replied Madame Danglars, "he would need it as a proof?"

"Ah, no, madame, that could not be. Dead bodies are not kept a year; they are shown to a magistrate, and the evidence is taken. Now, nothing of the kind has happened."

"What then?" asked Hermine, trembling violently.

"Something more terrible, more fatal, more alarming for us!—the child was perhaps alive, and the assassin saved it!"

Madame Danglars uttered a piercing cry, and seizing Villefort's hands, "My child was alive!" said she; "you buried my child alive, monsieur! You were not certain that my child was dead, and you buried it! Ah—"

Madame Danglars had risen, and stood with an expression almost threatening before the *procureur*, whose hands she wrung in her feeble grasp.

"What do I know about it? I merely suppose so, as I might suppose anything else," replied Villefort, with a stony gaze which indicated that his powerful mind was on the verge of despair and madness.

"Ah, my child, my poor child!" cried the baroness, falling on her chair, and stifling her sobs in her handkerchief.

Villefort, recovering himself, perceived that to avert the maternal storm gathering over his head, he must inspire Madame Danglars with the terror he felt. "You understand, then, that if that were so," said he, rising in his turn, and approaching the baroness, to speak to her in a lower tone, "we are lost. This child lives; and some one knows it lives,—some one is in possession of our secret. And since Monte Cristo speaks before us of a child disinterred, when that child could not be found, it is he who is in possession of our secret."

"Just God! avenging God!" murmured Madame Danglars.

Villefort replied only by a muffled groan.

"But the child—the child, monsieur?" repeated the agitated mother.

"How have I searched for him!" replied Villefort, wringing his hands; "how have I called him in my long sleepless nights! How have I longed for royal wealth to purchase a million of secrets from a million of men, that I might find mine among them! At last, one day when for the hundredth time I took up my spade, I asked myself again and again what the Corsican could have done with the child. A child encumbers a fugitive; perhaps on perceiving it was still alive, he had thrown it into the river."

"Impossible!" cried Madame Danglars; "a man may murder another out of revenge, but he would not deliberately drown a child."

"Perhaps," continued Villefort, "he had put it in the foundling hospital."

"Oh, yes, yes!" cried the baroness; "my child is there!"

"I hastened to the hospital and learned that the same night —the night of the 20th of September—a child had been brought there, wrapped in part of a fine linen napkin, purposely torn in half. This portion of the napkin was marked with half a baron's crown, and the letter H."

"That was it!" cried Madame Danglars; "all my linen was

marked thus. M. de Nargonne was a baron, and my name is Hermine. Thank God! my child was not dead!"

"No, it was not dead."

"And you can tell me so without fearing to make me die of joy, monsieur? Where is it? Where is my child?"

Villefort shrugged his shoulders. "Do I know?" said he; "and do you believe that if I knew I would relate to you all its trials and all its adventures as would a dramatist or a novel-writer? Alas, no! I know not. A woman about six months after came to claim it with the other half of the napkin. This woman gave all the requisite particulars; and it was intrusted to her."

"But you should have inquired for the woman; you should have traced her."

"And how do you think, then, that I have been occupied, madame? I feigned a criminal process, and employed all the most acute bloodhounds and skilful agents in search of her. They traced her to Châlons, and there they lost her."

"They lost her?"

"Yes, for ever."

Madame Danglars had listened to this recital with a sigh, a tear, or a shriek for every circumstance. "And this is all?" said she; "and you stopped there?"

"Oh, no!" said Villefort; "I never ceased to search and to inquire. However, for the last two or three years I have allowed myself some respite. But now I will begin with more perseverance and fury than ever; and you will see that I shall succeed,—for it is no longer conscience that drives me, it is fear."

"But," replied Madame Danglars, "the Count of Monte Cristo can know nothing, or he would not seek our society as he does."

"Oh, the wickedness of man is very great," said Villefort, "since it surpasses the goodness of God. Have you observed that man's eyes while he was speaking to us?"

"No."

"But have you ever watched him carefully?"

"Certainly. He is odd, but that is all. One thing I have noticed,—of all the exquisite things he placed before us, he touched nothing; it was always from another dish that he helped himself."

"Yes, yes!" said Villefort; "I also noticed that. If I had known what I know now, I would not have touched anything myself; I should have believed that he intended to poison us."

"And you see you would have been mistaken."

"Yes, doubtless; but believe me, that man has other projects. For that reason I wished to see you, to speak to you, to warn you against every one, but especially against him. Tell me," cried Villefort, fixing his eyes more steadfastly on her than he had done before, "did you ever reveal to any one our connection?"

"Never, to any one."

"You understand me?" replied Villefort, affectionately; "when I say any one,—pardon my urgency,—I mean to any one in the world."

"Yes, yes, I understand very well," said the baroness, blushing; "never, I swear to you."

"Were you ever in the habit of writing in the evening what had happened during the day? Do you keep a journal?"

"No; alas! my life has been passed in frivolity. I wish to forget it myself."

"Do you talk in your sleep?"

"I sleep like a child; do you not remember?" The colour mounted to the baroness's face, and Villefort turned pale.

"It is true," said he, in so low a tone that he could hardly be heard.

"Well?" said the baroness.

"Well, I understand what I now have to do," replied Villefort. "In one week from this time I shall know who this M. de Monte Cristo is, whence he comes, where he goes, and why he speaks in our presence of children who have been disinterred in his garden."

Villefort pronounced these words with an accent which would have made the count shudder had he heard him. Then he pressed the hand the baroness reluctantly gave him, and led her respectfully to the door. Madame Danglars returned in another *fiacre* to the passage, on the other side of which she found her carriage, and her coachman sleeping peacefully on his box while waiting for her.

CHAPTER LXVIII

A SUMMER BALL

The same day, during the interview of Madame Danglars with the *procureur*, a travelling-carriage entered the Rue du Helder, passed through the gateway of No. 27, and stopped in the yard. In a moment the door was opened, and Madame de Morcerf

alighted, leaning on her son's arm. Albert soon left her, ordered his horses, and having arranged his toilet, drove to the Champs Elysées, to the house of Monte Cristo. The count received him with his habitual smile. It was a strange thing that no one ever appeared to advance a step towards intimacy with that man. Those who would, so to speak, force a passage to his heart, encountered an impassable barrier. Morcerf, who ran towards him with open arms, was chilled as he drew near, in spite of the friendly smile, and ventured only to hold out his hand. Monte Cristo shook it coldly, according to his invariable practice.

"Well!" said Albert; "here I am, dear count."

"Welcome home again!"

"I arrived an hour ago."

"From Dieppe?"

"No, from Tréport."

"Ah, true!"

"And my first visit is to you."

"That is extremely kind of you," said Monte Cristo, with a tone of perfect indifference.

"Well! what is the news?"

"You should not ask a stranger, a foreigner, for news."

"I know it; but in asking for news, I mean, have you done anything for me?"

"Had you intrusted me with some commission?" said Monte Cristo, feigning uneasiness.

"Come, come!" said Albert; "do not assume indifference. It is said that there are sympathetic communications that may come from a distance,—well, at Tréport I felt the electric shock; you have either been working for me or thinking of me."

"Possibly," said Monte Cristo, "I have indeed thought of you; but the magnetic current of which I was the conductor acted, I must confess, without my knowledge."

"Indeed! pray tell me how it happened?"

"It is a simple matter,—M. Danglars dined with me."

"I know it; to avoid meeting him, my mother and I left town."

"But he dined also with M. Andrea Cavalcanti."

"Your Italian prince?"

"Not so fast; M. Andrea only calls himself viscount."

"Calls himself, do you say?"

"Yes, calls himself."

"Is he not a viscount?"

"Eh! how do I know? He calls himself so. I of course give him the same title, and every one else does the same."

"What a strange man you are! What next? You say M. Danglars dined here?"

"Yes."

"With your Vicomte Andrea Cavalcanti?"

"With Vicomte Cavalcanti, the marquis his father, Madame Danglars, Monsieur and Madame de Villefort,—charming people,—M. Debray, Maximilian Morrel, and then who else? Wait a moment—ah! M. de Château-Renaud."

"Did they speak of me?"

"Not a word."

"So much the worse."

"Why so? I thought you wished them to forget you?"

"If they did not speak of me, I am sure they thought about me; and I am in despair."

"How will that affect you, since Mademoiselle Danglars was not among the number here who thought of you? It is true, she might have thought of you at home."

"I have no fear of that; or if she did, it was only in the same way in which I think of her."

"Touching sympathy! so you hate each other?" said the count.

"Listen!" said Morcerf. "If Mademoiselle Danglars were disposed to take pity on the martyrdom which I do not suffer on her account, and to recompense me outside of the matrimonial formalities arranged between our two families, that would suit me completely. In a word, Mademoiselle Danglars would make a charming mistress; but a wife, *diable!*"

"And this," said Monte Cristo, "is the way in which you think of your intended spouse?"

"Yes, rather brutal, it is true, but at least exact. But as this dream cannot be realised, since Mademoiselle Danglars must become my wife,—that is to say, must live with me, sing to me, compose verses and music within ten paces of me, and that for my whole life,—it frightens me. One may forsake a mistress, but a wife, good heavens! that is another thing; that is perpetual,—be she near or far away, it is a permanent thing. Now it is frightful to think of always having Mademoiselle Danglars,—even at a distance."

"You are difficult to please, viscount."

"Yes, for I often wish for what is impossible."

"What is that?"

"To find such a wife as my father found."

Monte Cristo turned pale, and looked at Albert, while playing with some magnificent pistols.

"Your father was fortunate, then?" said he.

"You know my opinion of my mother, count; look at her, still beautiful, still vivacious,—more than ever. For any other son to have accompanied his mother four days at Tréport would have been a bit of drudgery, a bore; but I have spent four days in her society with more satisfaction, more repose, more—poetry, shall I say?—than if I had taken Queen Mab or Titania as my companion."

"That is an overwhelming perfection; and you would make every one vow to live a single life."

"This is the reason," continued Morcerf, "why, knowing that there is in the world an accomplished woman, I am not eager to marry Mademoiselle Danglars. Have you ever noticed how much a thing is heightened in value when we obtain possession of it? The diamond which glittered in the window of Marlé or of Fossin shines with more splendour when it is our own; but if we are compelled to acknowledge the superiority of another, and still must retain the one that is inferior, do you understand what must be the suffering?"

"Worldling!" murmured the count.

"Thus I shall rejoice when Mademoiselle Eugénie perceives I am but a pitiful atom, with scarcely as many hundred thousand livres as she has millions."

Monte Cristo smiled.

"One plan occurred to me," continued Albert; "Franz likes all that is eccentric. I tried to make him fall in love with Mademoiselle Danglars; but in spite of four letters, written in the most alluring style, he invariably answered: 'My eccentricity may be great, but it will not make me break my promise.'"

"That is what I call devoted friendship, to recommend to another one whom you would not marry yourself."

Albert smiled. "By the way," continued he, "Franz is coming soon. But that will not interest you; you dislike him, I think?"

"I!" said Monte Cristo; "my dear viscount, what has led you to think that I do not like M. Franz? I like every one."

"And you include me in the expression 'every one'? Thanks!"

"Let us not mistake," said Monte Cristo; "I love every one as God commands us to love our neighbour,—in the Christian sense; but I thoroughly hate only a few. Let us return to M. Franz d'Epinay. You say that he is coming?"

"Yes; summoned by M. de Villefort, who is apparently as anxious to get Mademoiselle Valentine married as M. Danglars

is to see Mademoiselle Eugénie settled. It must be a very irksome office to be the father of a grown-up daughter; it seems to make them feverish, and that their pulse beats ninety strokes per minute until they get rid of them."

"But M. d'Epinay, unlike you, bears his misfortune patiently."

"Still more, he talks seriously about the matter, puts on a white cravat, and speaks already of his family. Besides, he has a very high opinion of Monsieur and Madame de Villefort."

"Which they deserve, do they not?"

"I believe they do. M. de Villefort has always passed for a severe but a just man."

"There is, then, one," said Monte Cristo, "whom you do not condemn as you do that poor Danglars?"

"Because I am not compelled to marry his daughter, perhaps," replied Albert, laughing.

"Indeed, my dear monsieur," said Monte Cristo, "you are revoltingly self-conceited."

"I self-conceited?"

"Yes, you; take a cigar."

"Very willingly. And how am I self-conceited?"

"Why, because here you are defending yourself, struggling to escape marrying Mademoiselle Danglars. Let things take their course; perhaps you will not be the first to withdraw."

"Bah!" said Albert, staring.

"Doubtless, Monsieur the Viscount, they will not put your neck under the yoke by force. Come, seriously, do you wish to break off your engagement?"

"I would give a hundred thousand livres to be able to do so."

"Then make yourself quite happy. M. Danglars would give double that sum to attain the same end."

"Am I, indeed, so happy?" said Albert, who still could not prevent an almost imperceptible cloud from passing over his brow. "But, my dear count, M. Danglars has reasons, then?"

"Ah! there is your proud and selfish nature. You would expose the self-love of another with a hatchet, but you shrink if your own is attacked with a needle."

"No, but it seems to me that M. Danglars—"

"Ought to be delighted with you, eh? Well, he is a man of bad taste, and is still more enchanted with another."

"With whom?"

"I do not know; study and judge for yourself."

"Thank you, I understand. Listen: my mother—no, not my mother, I mistake—my father intends giving a ball."

"A ball at this season?"

"Summer balls are fashionable."

"If they were not, the countess has only to wish it, and they would become so."

"You are right; you know they are unmixed balls,—those who remain in Paris in July must be true Parisians. Will you take charge of our invitation to MM. Cavalcanti?"

"When will it take place?"

"On Saturday."

"M. Cavalcanti the elder will be gone."

"But the son will be here; will you invite young M. Cavalcanti?"

"I do not know him, viscount."

"You do not know him?"

"No, I have never seen him until a few days since, and am not responsible for him in any respect."

"But you receive him at your house?"

"That is another thing; he was recommended to me by a good abbé, who may be deceived. Give him a direct invitation, but do not ask me to present him; if he were afterwards to marry Mademoiselle Danglars you would accuse me of intrigue, and would be challenging me,—besides, I may not be there myself."

"Where?"

"At your ball."

"Why should you not be there?"

"For one reason, because you have not yet invited me."

"But I come expressly for that purpose."

"You are very kind, but I may be prevented."

"If I tell you one thing you will be so amiable as to set aside all impediments."

"Tell me what it is."

"My mother begs you to come."

"The Comtesse de Morcerf?" said Monte Cristo, starting.

"Ah, count," said Albert, "I assure you Madame de Morcerf speaks freely to me; and if you have not felt those sympathetic fibres of which I spoke just now thrill within you, you must be entirely devoid of them, for during the last four days we have spoken of no one else."

"You have talked of me?"

"Yes, that is your privilege, being a living problem."

"Then I am also a problem to your mother? I should have thought her too reasonable for such vagaries of the imagination."

"A problem, my dear count, for every one,—for my mother as well as others. Much studied, but not solved, you still remain an enigma; do not fear. My mother is always asking how it is

that you are so young. I believe that while the Comtesse G—— takes you for Lord Ruthven, my mother imagines you to be Cagliostro or Comte Saint-Germain. The first opportunity you have confirm her in her opinion; it will be easy for you, as you have the philosopher's stone of the one and the wit of the other."

"I thank you for the warning," said the count; "I shall endeavour to be prepared for all suppositions."

"You will, then, come on Saturday?"

"Yes, since Madame de Morcerf invites me."

"You are very kind."

"Will M. Danglars be there?"

"He has already been invited by my father. We shall try to persuade the great D'Aguessau, M. de Villefort, to come, but have not much hope of seeing him."

"'Never despair,' says the proverb."

"Do you dance, count?"

"I dance?"

"Yes, you; what is there surprising in that?"

"That is very well before one is above forty. No, I do not dance, but I like to see others. Does Madame de Morcerf dance?"

"Never; you can talk to her, she so much wishes to converse with you."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, truly; and I assure you, you are the only man for whom she has shown that curiosity."

Albert rose and took his hat; the count conducted him to the door. "I have one thing to reproach myself with," said he, stopping Albert on the steps.

"What is it?"

"I have spoken to you indiscreetly about Danglars."

"On the contrary, speak to me always in the same strain about him."

"Good! you reassure me. By the way, when do you expect M. d'Epinay?"

"Five or six days hence at the latest."

"And when is he to be married?"

"Immediately on the arrival of Monsieur and Madame de Saint-Méran."

"Bring him to see me. Although you say I do not like him, I assure you I shall be happy to see him."

"I will obey your orders, my lord."

"Good-by."

"Until Saturday, when I may expect you, may I not?"

"Yes, I promised you."

The count watched Albert, waving his hand to him. When he had mounted his phaeton Monte Cristo turned, and seeing Bertuccio, "What news?" said he.

"She went to the Palais," replied the steward.

"Did she stay there long?"

"An hour and a half."

"Did she return home?"

"Directly."

"Well, my dear Bertuccio," said the count, "I now advise you to go in quest of the little estate I spoke to you of in Normandy."

Bertuccio bowed; and as his wishes were in perfect harmony with the order he had received, he started the same evening.

CHAPTER LXIX

THE INQUIRY

M. de Villefort kept the promise he had made to Madame Danglars to endeavour to find out how the Count of Monte Cristo had discovered the history of the house of Auteuil. He wrote the same day to M. de Boville (who, from having been an inspector of prisons, was promoted to a high office in the police) for the information he desired; and the latter begged two days to ascertain who would be most likely to give him the desired information. At the end of the second day, M. de Villefort received the following note:—

"The person called M. le Comte de Monte Cristo is an intimate acquaintance of Lord Wilmore, a rich foreigner who is sometimes seen in Paris, and who is there at this moment; he is also known to the Abbé Busoni, a Sicilian priest of high repute in the East, where he has done much good."

M. de Villefort replied by ordering the strictest inquiries to be made respecting these two persons; his orders were executed, and the following evening he received these details:—

"The abbé, who was in Paris for a month, inhabited a small house behind St. Sulpice, composed of a single story over the ground-floor; two rooms were on each floor, and he was the only tenant. The two lower rooms consisted of a dining-room, with a table, chairs, and side-board of walnut, and a wainscoted parlour, without ornaments, carpet, or timepiece. It was evident that the abbé limited himself to objects of strict necessity. The abbé preferred the sitting-room upstairs, which, being furnished with theological books and parchments in which he delighted to bury himself during whole months,

was more a library than a parlour. His valet looked at the visitors through a sort of wicket; and if their countenances were unknown to him or displeased him, he replied that Monsieur the Abbé was not in Paris,—an answer which satisfied most persons, because the abbé was known to be a great traveller. Besides, whether at home or not, whether in Paris or Cairo, the abbé always left something to give away, which the valet distributed through this wicket in his master's name. The other room, near the library, was a bedroom. A bed without curtains, four armchairs, and a couch covered with yellow Utrecht velvet, composed, with an ottoman, all its furniture.

"Lord Wilmore resided in Rue Fontaine St. George. He was one of those English tourists who consume a large fortune in travelling. He hired his apartments furnished, passed only a few hours in the day there, and rarely slept there. One of his peculiarities was never to speak a word of French, which however he wrote with great purity."

The day after these important particulars had been furnished to the *procureur*, a man alighted from a carriage at the corner of the Rue Férou, and rapping at an olive-green door, asked if the Abbé Busoni were within.

"No, he went out early this morning," replied the valet.

"I cannot be contented with that answer," replied the visitor, "for I come from one to whom every one must be at home. But have the kindness to give the Abbé Busoni—"

"I have already told you that he is not at home!" repeated the valet.

"Then, on his return give him that card and this sealed paper. Will he be at home at eight o'clock this evening?"

"Doubtless; unless he is at work, which is the same as if he were out."

"I will come again at that time," replied the visitor, who then retired.

At the appointed hour the same man returned in the same carriage, which instead of stopping this time at the end of the Rue Férou, drove up to the green door. He knocked, and it was opened immediately to admit him. From the signs of respect the valet paid him, he saw that his note had produced the desired effect. "Is the abbé at home?" he asked.

"Yes, he is at work in his library; but he expects you, sir," replied the valet. The stranger ascended a rough staircase, and before a table illumined by a lamp whose light was concentrated by a large shade, while the rest of the apartment was in partial darkness, he perceived the abbé in a monk's dress, with a cowl on his head such as was used by learned men of the Middle Ages. "Have I the honour of addressing the Abbé Busoni?" asked the visitor.

"Yes, monsieur," replied the abbé; "and you are the person whom M. de Boville, formerly an inspector of prisons, sends to me from the prefect of police?"

"Exactly, monsieur."

"One of the agents appointed to secure the safety of Paris?"

"Yes, monsieur," replied the stranger, with a slight hesitation, and blushing.

The abbé replaced the large spectacles, which covered not only his eyes but his temples, and sitting down, motioned to his visitor to do the same. "I am at your service, monsieur," said he, with a marked Italian accent.

"The mission with which I am charged, monsieur," replied the visitor, speaking with hesitation, "is a confidential one on the part of him who fulfils it and on the part of him to whom he is sent." The abbé bowed. "Your probity," replied the stranger, "is so well known to the prefect that he wishes, as a magistrate, to ascertain from you some particulars connected with the public safety; to ascertain which I am deputed to see you. It is hoped that no ties of friendship or humane consideration will induce you to conceal the truth."

"Provided, monsieur, the particulars you wish for do not interfere with my scruples or my conscience. I am a priest, monsieur; and the secrets of confession, for instance, must remain between me and the justice of God, and not between me and human justice."

"Do not alarm yourself, Monsieur the Abbé, we will duly respect your conscience."

At this moment the abbé, by pressing down the shade on the side nearest himself, raised it on the other and threw a bright light on the face of the stranger, while his own remained obscured.

"Excuse me, Monsieur the Abbé," said the envoy of the prefect of the police, "but the light tries my eyes very much."

The abbé lowered the shade. "Now, monsieur," he said, "I am listening; speak!"

"I will come at once to the point. Do you know the Count of Monte Cristo?"

"You mean M. Zaccone, I presume?"

"Zaccone! is not his name Monte Cristo?"

"Monte Cristo is the name of an estate, or rather, of a rock, and not a family name."

"Well, be it so—let us not dispute about words; and since M. de Monte Cristo and M. Zaccone are the same—"

"Absolutely the same."

"Let us speak of M. Zaccone."

"Well?"

"I asked you if you know him?"

"Intimately."

"Who is he?"

"The son of a rich shipbuilder in Malta."

"I know that is the report; but, as you are aware, the police does not content itself with vague reports."

"However," replied the abbé, with an affable smile, "when that report is in accordance with the truth, everybody must believe it,—the police as well as all the rest."

"But are you sure of what you assert?"

"What do you mean by that question?"

"Understand, monsieur, I do not in the least suspect your veracity; I ask you, are you certain of it?"

"I knew his father, M. Zaccone."

"Ah, ah!"

"And when a child I often played with the son in the shipyards."

"But whence does he derive the title of count?"

"You are aware that may be bought."

"In Italy?"

"Everywhere."

"And his wealth, which is immense according to common report—"

"Oh, as to that," said the abbé, "'immense' is the proper word."

"How much do you suppose he possesses?"

"From one hundred and fifty to two hundred thousand livres per annum."

"This is reasonable," said the visitor; "I have heard that he had three or four millions."

"Two hundred thousand per annum would make four millions of capital."

"But I was told that he had four millions per annum."

"Oh, that is not credible."

"Do you know this island of Monte Cristo?"

"Certainly; every one who has returned from Palermo, from Naples, or from Rome to France, by sea, must know it, since he has passed close to it, and must have seen it."

"I am told that it is a delightful place."

"It is a rock."

"And why has the count bought a rock?"

"For the sake of being a count. In Italy one must have a county to be a count."

" You have doubtless heard the adventures of M. Zaccone's youth? "

" The father's? "

" No, the son's."

" I know nothing certain; at that period of his life I lost sight of my young comrade."

" Did he go to war? "

" I think he entered the service."

" In what force? "

" In the navy."

" Are you not his confessor? "

" No, sir; I believe he is a Lutheran."

" A Lutheran? "

" I say I believe such is the case, I do not affirm it; besides, I believe liberty of conscience is established in France? "

" Doubtless, and we are not now inquiring into his creed, but his actions; in the name of the prefect of police, I summon you to tell me what you know of him."

" He passes for a very charitable man. Our Holy Father, the pope, has made him a chevalier of Christ—a favour accorded only to princes—for the services he rendered to the Christians in the East; he has five or six ribbons of distinguished orders, as testimonials from Eastern monarchs for his services."

" Does he wear them? "

" No; but he is proud of them. He is better pleased with rewards given to the benefactors of man than to his destroyers."

" He is a Quaker, then? "

" Exactly; he is a Quaker, with the exception of the peculiar dress."

" Has he any friends? "

" Yes, every one who knows him is his friend."

" But has he any enemies? "

" One only."

" What is his name? "

" Lord Wilmore."

" Where is he? "

" He is in Paris just now."

" Can he give me any particulars? "

" Important ones; he was in India with Zaccone."

" Do you know his abode? "

" It is somewhere in the Chaussée d'Antin; but I know neither the street nor the number."

" Are you at variance with the Englishman? "

"I love Zaccone, and he hates him; we are consequently not friends."

"Do you think the Count of Monte Cristo had ever been in France before he made this visit to Paris?"

"To that question I can answer positively. No, monsieur, he had never been here, because he applied to me six months since for information that he needed. In my turn, as I knew not when I might again come to Paris, I recommended M. Cavalcanti to him."

"Andrea?"

"No; Bartolomeo, his father."

"Now, monsieur, I have but one question more to ask; and I charge you in the name of honour, of humanity, and of religion, to answer me candidly."

"What is it, monsieur?"

"Do you know with what design M. de Monte Cristo purchased a house at Auteuil?"

"Certainly, for he told me."

"With what design, monsieur?"

"To make a lunatic asylum of it, similar to that founded by the Baron de Pisani at Palermo. Do you know that asylum?"

"I have heard of it."

"It is a magnificent institution." Having said this, the abbé bowed to imply that he wished to pursue his studies. The visitor either understood the abbé's meaning, or had no more questions to ask; he rose, and the abbé accompanied him to the door.

"You are a great almsgiver," said the visitor; "and although you are said to be rich, I will venture to offer you something for your poor people. Will you accept my offering?"

"I thank you, monsieur; I am jealous of only one thing; namely, that the relief I give should be entirely from my own resources."

"However—"

"My resolution, monsieur, is unchangeable; but you have only to search for yourself, and you will find, alas! too many objects upon whom to exercise your benevolence." The abbé once more bowed as he opened the door; the stranger bowed and took his leave. The carriage conducted him straight to the house of M. de Villefort. An hour afterwards the carriage was again ordered, and this time it went to the Rue Fontaine St. George, and stopped at No. 5, where Lord Wilmore lived. The stranger had written to Lord Wilmore, requesting an interview, which the latter had fixed for ten o'clock. As the envoy

of the prefect of police arrived ten minutes before ten, he was told that Lord Wilmore, who was precision and punctuality personified, was not yet come in, but that he would be sure to return at ten exactly.

The visitor was ushered into the drawing-room, which was like all other furnished drawing-rooms. A mantelpiece, with two modern Sèvres vases; a timepiece representing Cupid with his bent bow; a looking-glass with an engraving on each side,—one representing Homer carrying his guide, the other, Belisarius begging; a greyish paper; red and black tapestry,—such was the appearance of Lord Wilmore's drawing-room. It was illuminated by lamps, with ground-glass shades, which gave only a feeble light, as if out of consideration for the weak sight of the prefect's emissary. After ten minutes' expectation the clock struck ten; at the fifth stroke the door opened, and Lord Wilmore appeared. He was rather above the middle height, with thin reddish whiskers, light complexion, and light hair, turning grey. He was dressed with all the English eccentricity,—namely, in a blue coat with gilt buttons and high collar, in the fashion of 1811, a white kerseymere waistcoat, and nankeen trousers three inches too short, but which were prevented by straps from slipping up to the knee. His first remark on entering was, "You know, monsieur, I do not speak French?"

"I know you do not like to converse in our language," replied the envoy.

"But you may use it," replied Lord Wilmore; "for though I do not speak it, I understand it."

"And I," replied the visitor, changing his idiom, "know enough of English to keep up the conversation. Do not put yourself to the slightest inconvenience."

"Heigh-ho!" said Lord Wilmore, with that tone which is known only to natives of Great Britain.

The envoy presented his letter of introduction, which the latter read with English coolness; and having finished, "I understand," said he,—"I understand very well."

Then began the questions, which were similar to those which had been addressed to the Abbé Busoni; but as Lord Wilmore, in the character of the count's enemy, was less restrained in his answers, they were more numerous. He described the youth of Monte Cristo, who, he said, at ten years of age entered the service of one of those petty sovereigns of India who make war on the English; it was there that Wilmore had first met him and fought against him. In that war Zaccone had been taken prisoner, sent to England, and confined in a prison-ship, whence

he had escaped by swimming. Then began his travels, his duels, his passions; then came the insurrection in Greece, and he had served in the Grecian ranks. While in that service he had discovered a silver mine in the mountains of Thessaly; but he had been careful to conceal it from every one. After the battle of Navarino, when the Greek Government was consolidated, he asked of King Otho a mining grant for that district, which was given him. Hence that immense fortune, which might in Lord Wilmore's opinion amount to one or two millions per annum,—a precarious fortune which might be suddenly lost by the failure of the mine.

"But," asked the visitor, "do you know why he came to France?"

"He is speculating in railways," said Lord Wilmore; "and being a skilful chemist, and a physicist not less distinguished, he has discovered a new telegraph, which he is seeking to bring into use."

"How much does he spend yearly?" asked the prefect's emissary.

"Not more than five or six hundred thousand livres," said Lord Wilmore; "he is a miser."

Hatred evidently inspired the Englishman, who, knowing no other reproach to bring on the count, accused him of avarice.

"Do you know his house at Auteuil?"

"Certainly."

"What do you know respecting it?"

"Do you wish to know why he bought it?"

"Yes."

"The count is a speculator, who will certainly ruin himself in Utopian experiments. He supposes there is in the neighbourhood of the house he has bought a mineral spring equal to those at Bagnères, Luchon, and Cauterets. He is going to turn his house into a *bad-haus*, as the Germans term it. He has already dug up all the garden two or three times to find the famous spring, and being unsuccessful, he will soon purchase all the contiguous houses. Now, as I dislike him, and hope his railway, his electric telegraph, or his search for baths will ruin him, I am watching for his discomfiture, which must soon take place."

"What was the cause of your quarrel?"

"When in England he seduced the wife of one of my friends."

"Why do you not seek revenge?"

"I have already fought three duels with him," said the Englishman; "the first with the pistol, the second with the sword, and the third with the two-handed sword."

"And what was the result of those duels?"

"The first time, he broke my arm; the second, he wounded me in the breast, and the third time, made this large wound." The Englishman turned down his shirt-collar, and showed a scar whose redness proved it to be a recent one. "So that I am his enemy, and I am sure that he will die by my hand."

"But," said the envoy, "you are not now on the way to kill him, it seems to me."

"Heigh-ho!" said the Englishman, "I practise shooting every day, and every other day Grisier comes to my house."

This was all the visitor wished to ascertain, or rather, all the Englishman appeared to know. The agent rose; and having bowed to Lord Wilmore, who returned his salutation with the stiff politeness of the English, he retired. Lord Wilmore, having heard the door close after him, returned to his bedroom, where with one hand he pulled off his light hair, his red whiskers, his false jaw, and his scar, to resume the black hair, the dark complexion, and the pearly teeth of the Count of Monte Cristo. It was M. de Villefort, and not the prefect's emissary, who returned to the house of M. de Villefort. The *procureur du roi* felt more at ease, although he had learned nothing really satisfactory; and for the first time since the dinner-party at Auteuil, he slept soundly.

CHAPTER LXX

THE BALL

It was in the warmest days of July, when in due course of time the Saturday arrived upon which the ball of M. de Morcerf was to take place. It was ten o'clock at night; the large trees in the garden of the count's hotel stood out distinctly against the sky, studded with golden stars, where the last mists of a storm, which had threatened all day, yet floated. From the halls on the ground-floor might be heard the sound of music, with the whirl of the waltz and galop, while brilliant streams of light shone through the openings of the Venetian blinds. At this moment the garden was occupied only by ten servants, who had just received orders from their mistress to prepare the supper, the serenity of the weather continuing to increase. Until now, it had been undecided whether the supper should take place in the dining-room or under a long tent erected on the lawn; but the beautiful blue sky covered with stars had determined the case in favour of the lawn. The gardens were illuminated with coloured

lanterns, according to the Italian custom; and the supper-table was loaded with wax-lights and flowers, according to the custom in all countries where the luxuries of the table are well understood.

At the time the Comtesse de Morcerf returned to the rooms after giving her orders, many guests were arriving, more attracted by the charming hospitality of the countess than by the distinguished position of the count,—for owing to the good taste of Mercédès, one was sure of finding some arrangements at her fête worthy of relating, or even copying in case of need. Madame Danglars, in whom the events we have related had caused deep anxiety, had hesitated about going to Madame de Morcerf's, when during the morning her carriage happened to cross that of M. de Villefort. The latter made a sign; and the carriages having drawn close together, he said, "You are going to Madame de Morcerf's, are you not?"

"No," replied Madame Danglars, "I am too ill."

"You are wrong," replied Villefort, significantly; "it is important that you should be seen there."

"Do you think so?" demanded the baroness.

"I do."

"In that case I will go." And the two carriages passed on towards their different destinations.

Madame Danglars therefore came, not only beautiful in person but radiant with splendour; she entered by one door at the same time Mercédès appeared at the other. The countess sent Albert to meet Madame Danglars. He approached, paid her some well-merited compliments on her toilet, and offered his arm to conduct her to a seat. Albert looked around him.

"You are looking for my daughter?" said the baroness, smiling.

"I confess it," replied Albert. "Could you have been so cruel as not to bring her?"

"Calm yourself. She has met Mademoiselle de Villefort, and has taken her arm. See, they are following us, both in white dresses,—one with a bouquet of camellias, the other with one of myosotis. But tell me—"

"Well, what do you wish to know?"

"Will not the Count of Monte Cristo be here to-night?"

"Seventeen!" replied Albert.

"What do you mean?"

"I only mean that the count seems the rage," replied the viscount, smiling, "and that you are the seventeenth person who has asked me the same question. The count is in fashion; I congratulate him upon it."

" And have you replied to every one as you have to me?"

" Ah! to be sure, I have not answered you. Be satisfied; we shall have this lion. We are among the privileged ones."

" Were you at the opera yesterday?"

" No."

" He was there."

" Ah, indeed! And did the eccentric person commit any new originality?"

" Can he show himself without doing so? Elssler was dancing in 'Le Diable Boiteux;' the Greek princess was in ecstasies. After the *cachucha* he placed a magnificent ring on the stem of a bouquet, and threw it to the charming *danseuse*, who in the third act, to do honour to the gift, reappeared with it on her finger. And the Greek princess, will she be here?"

" No, you will be deprived of that pleasure; her position in the count's establishment is not sufficiently understood."

" Wait; leave me here, and go and speak to Madame de Villefort, who is longing to engage your attention."

Albert bowed to Madame Danglars, and advanced towards Madame de Villefort, whose lips opened as he approached. " I wager anything," said Albert, interrupting her, " that I know what you were about to say."

" Well, what is it?"

" If I guess rightly, will you confess it?"

" Yes."

" On your honour?"

" On my honour."

" You were going to ask me if the Count of Monte Cristo were arrived, or expected."

" Not at all. It is not of him that I am now thinking. I was going to ask you if you had received any news of M. Franz?"

" Yes, yesterday."

" What did he tell you?"

" That he was leaving at the same time as his letter."

" Well, now then, the count?"

" The count will come; be satisfied."

" You know that he has another name besides Monte Cristo?"

" No, I did not know it."

" Monte Cristo is the name of an island; and he has a family name."

" I never heard it."

" Well, then, I am better informed than you; his name is Zaccone."

" It is possible."

"He is a Maltese."

"That is also possible."

"The son of a ship-owner."

"Really, you should relate all this aloud; you would have the greatest success."

"He served in India, discovered a mine in Thessaly, and comes to Paris to form a mineral-water establishment at Auteuil."

"Well! I'm sure," said Morcerf, "this is indeed news! Am I allowed to repeat it?"

"Yes, but cautiously; tell one thing at a time, and do not say I told you."

"Why so?"

"Because it is a secret just discovered."

"By whom?"

"The police."

"Then the news originated—"

"At the prefect's last night. Paris, you can understand, is astonished at the sight of such unusual splendour, and the police have made inquiries."

"Good! nothing more is wanting than to arrest the count as a vagabond, on the pretext of his being too rich."

"Indeed, this would doubtless have happened if his credentials had not been so favourable."

"Poor count! And is he aware of the danger he has been in?"

"I think not."

"Then it will be but charitable to inform him. When he arrives, I will not fail to do so."

Just then a handsome young man, with bright eyes, black hair, and glossy mustache, respectfully bowed to Madame de Villefort. Albert extended him his hand. "Madame," said Albert, "allow me to present to you M. Maximilian Morrel, captain of Spahis, one of our best, and above all, of our bravest officers."

"I have already had the pleasure of meeting this gentleman at Auteuil, at the house of the Count of Monte Cristo," replied Madame de Villefort, turning away with marked coldness of manner. This answer, and above all the tone in which it was uttered, chilled the heart of poor Morrel. But a recompense was in store for him; turning round, he saw near the door a beautiful fair face, whose large blue eyes were, without any marked expression, fixed upon him, while the bouquet of myosotis was gently raised to her lips.

The salutation was so well understood that Morrel, with the same expression in his eyes, placed his handkerchief to his mouth; and these two living statues, whose hearts beat so violently under their marble aspect, separated from each other by the whole length of the room, forgot themselves for a moment, or rather forgot the world in their mutual contemplation. They might have remained much longer lost in one another, without any one noticing their abstraction,—the Count of Monte Cristo had just entered. We have already said that there was something in the count which attracted universal attention wherever he appeared. It was not the coat, unexceptionable in its cut, though simple and unornamented; it was not the plain white waistcoat; it was not the trousers, that displayed the foot so perfectly formed,—it was none of these things that attracted the attention. It was his pale complexion, his waving black hair; it was the expression so calm and serene; it was the eye so dark and melancholy; it was the mouth, chiselled with such marvellous delicacy, which so easily expressed such high disdain, —these were what fixed all eyes upon him. Many men might have been handsomer; but certainly there could be none whose appearance was more *significant*, if the expression may be used. Everything about the count seemed to have its meaning, for the constant habit of thought which he had acquired had given to the expression of his face, and even to the most trifling gesture, an incomparable ease and force. Yet the Parisian world is so strange that even all this might not have won attention, had there not been, besides this, a mysterious story gilded by an immense fortune.

Meanwhile he advanced under a multitude of curious glances, and attended by slight salutations, to Madame de Morcerf, who, standing before a mantel-piece ornamented with flowers, had seen his entrance in a looking-glass placed opposite the door, and was prepared to receive him. She turned towards him with a serene smile just at the moment he was bowing to her. No doubt she fancied the count would speak to her, while on his side the count thought she was about to address him; but both remained silent, and after a mere bow, Monte Cristo directed his steps to Albert, who received him cordially.

"Have you seen my mother?" asked Albert.

"I have just had the pleasure," replied the count; "but I have not seen your father."

"See, he is down there, talking politics with that little group of great geniuses."

"Indeed!" said Monte Cristo; "and so those gentlemen

down there are men of great talent. I should not have guessed it. And for what kind of talent are they celebrated? You know there are different sorts."

"There is, in the first place, a scholar,—that tall dry-looking man; he discovered in the neighbourhood of Rome a kind of lizard with a vertebra more than usual, and he immediately laid his discovery before the Institute. The thing was contested for a long time, but finally decided in his favour. I can assure you the vertebra made a great noise in the learned world, and the gentleman, who was only a knight of the Legion of Honour, was made an officer."

"Come," said Monte Cristo, "this cross seems to me to be wisely awarded; I suppose had he found an additional vertebra, they would have made him a commander?"

"Very likely," said Albert.

"And who can that person be who has taken it into his head to wrap himself up in a blue coat embroidered with green?"

"Oh, that coat is not his own idea; it is the republic's, which deputed David to draw a uniform for the academicians."

"Indeed!" said Monte Cristo; "so this gentleman is an academician?"

"Within the last week he has been made one of the learned assembly."

"And what is his especial talent?"

"His talent? I believe he thrusts pins into the heads of rabbits; that he makes fowls eat madder; and that he pushes out the spinal marrow of dogs with whalebone."

"And he is made a member of the Academy of Sciences for this?"

"No; of the French Academy."

"But what has the French Academy to do with all this?"

"I was going to tell you. It seems—"

"That his experiments have very considerably advanced the cause of science, doubtless?"

"No; that his style of writing is very good."

"This must be very flattering to the feelings of the rabbits into whose heads he has thrust pins, to the fowls whose bones he has dyed red, and to the dog whose spinal marrow he has removed?"

Albert laughed.

"And the other one?" demanded the count.

"That one?"

"Yes, the third."

"Ah! in the dark blue coat?"

"Yes."

"He is a colleague of the count, and has very warmly opposed the Chamber of Peers having a uniform. He had a great oratorical success upon that question. He stood badly with the Liberal papers, but his noble opposition to the wishes of the court has recommended him to them. They talk of making him an ambassador."

"And what are his claims to the peerage?"

"He has composed two or three comic operas, written four or five articles in the *Siècle*, and voted five or six years for the minister."

"Bravo, viscount!" said Monte Cristo, smiling; "you are a delightful *cicerone*. And now you will do me a favour, will you not?"

"What is it?"

"Do not introduce me to any of these gentlemen; and should they wish it, you will warn me."

Just then the count felt his arm pressed. He turned round; it was Danglars. "Ah! is it you, baron?" said he.

"Why do you call me baron?" said Danglars; "you know that I care nothing for my title. I am not like you, viscount; you like your title, do you not?"

"Certainly," replied Albert, "seeing that without my title I should be nothing; while you, sacrificing the baron, would still remain the millionaire."

"Which seems to me the first title under the royalty of July," replied Danglars.

"Unfortunately," said Monte Cristo, "one's title to a millionaire does not last for life, like that of baron, peer of France, or academician; for example, the millionaires Frank and Poulmann, of Frankfort, who have just become bankrupts."

"Indeed!" said Danglars, becoming pale.

"Yes; I received the news this evening by a courier. I had about a million in their hands, but warned in time, I withdrew it a month ago."

"Ah," exclaimed Danglars, "they have drawn on me for two hundred thousand livres!"

"Well, you can guard against it; their signature is worth five per cent."

"Yes, but it is too late," said Danglars; "I have honoured their bills."

"Good!" said Monte Cristo; "here are two hundred thousand livres gone after—"

"Hush! do not mention these things," said Danglars; then,

approaching Monte Cristo, he added, "especially before young M. Cavalcanti;" after which he smiled and turned towards the young man in question.

Albert had left the count to speak to his mother, Danglars had gone to converse with young Cavalcanti; Monte Cristo was for an instant alone. Meanwhile the heat became excessive. The footmen were hastening through the rooms with trays loaded with ices. Monte Cristo wiped the perspiration from his forehead, but drew back when the waiter was presented to him; he took no refreshment. Madame de Morcerf did not lose sight of Monte Cristo; she saw the tray pass without his touching anything, and even noticed the movement with which he withdrew from it.

"Albert," she asked, "did you notice that?"

"What, mother?"

"That the count will never accept an invitation to dine with us."

"Yes; but then he breakfasted with me,—indeed, he made his first appearance in the world on that very occasion."

"But your house is not M. de Morcerf's," murmured Mercédès; "and since he has been here I have watched him."

"Well?"

"Well, he has taken nothing yet."

"The count is very temperate."

Mercédès smiled sadly. "Approach him," said she; "and when the next tray passes, insist upon his taking something."

"But why, mother?"

"Oblige me, Albert," said Mercédès.

Albert kissed his mother's hand and drew near to the count. Another salver passed, loaded like the preceding ones; she saw Albert attempt to persuade the count; but he obstinately refused. Albert rejoined his mother; she was very pale.

"Well," said she, "you see he refuses?"

"Yes; but why need this annoy you?"

"You know, Albert, women are singular creatures. I should like to have seen the count take something in my house, if only a morsel of pomegranate. Perhaps he cannot reconcile himself to the French style of living, and might prefer something else."

"Oh, no! I have seen him in Italy eat everything; no doubt he does not feel inclined this evening."

"And besides," said the countess, "accustomed as he is to burning climates, possibly he does not feel the heat as we do."

"I do not think that, for he has complained of feeling almost

suffocated, and asked why the Venetian blinds were not opened as well as the windows."

"In fact," said Mercédès, "it suggests a way of assuring myself whether his abstinence was intended;" and she left the room. A minute afterwards the blinds were thrown open; and through the jessamine and clematis that overhung the window might be seen the garden ornamented with lanterns, and the supper laid under the tent. Dancers, players, talkers,—all uttered an exclamation of joy; every one inhaled with delight the breeze that floated in. At the same time, Mercédès reappeared, paler than before, but with that immovable expression of countenance which she sometimes wore. She went straight to the group of which her husband formed the centre. "Do not detain these gentlemen here, count," she said; "they would prefer, I should think, to breathe in the garden rather than suffocate here, since they are not playing."

"Ah," said a gallant old general who in 1809 had sung "Partant pour la Syrie," "we will not go alone to the garden."

"Then," said Mercédès, "I will lead the way." Turning towards Monte Cristo, she added, "Count, will you oblige me with your arm?"

The count almost staggered at these simple words; then he fixed his eyes on Mercédès. It was but the glance of a moment; but it seemed to the countess to have lasted for a century, so much was expressed in that one look. He offered his arm to the countess; she leaned upon it, or rather just touched it with her little hand, and they together descended the steps, lined with rhododendrons and camellias. Behind them, by another outlet, a group of about twenty persons rushed into the garden with loud exclamations of delight.

CHAPTER LXXI

BREAD AND SALT

Madame de Morcerf entered an archway of trees with her companion. It was a grove of lindens conducting to a conservatory.

"It was too warm in the salon, was it not, count?" she asked.

"Yes, madame; and it was an excellent idea of yours to open the doors and the blinds." As he spoke these words, the count perceived that the hand of Mercédès trembled. "But

you," he continued, " with that light dress, and without anything to cover you but that gauze scarf, perhaps you feel cold?"

" Do you know where I am leading you?" said the countess, without replying to the question of Monte Cristo.

" No, madame," replied Monte Cristo; " but you see I make no resistance."

" We are going to the green-house that you see at the end of this path."

The count looked at Mercédès as if to interrogate her, but she continued her course without speaking; Monte Cristo also was silent. They reached the building, ornamented with magnificent fruits, which ripen even in July in the artificial temperature which is substituted for the warmth of the sun, which in our climate is so often obscured. The countess left the arm of Monte Cristo, and picked a bunch of Muscatel grapes. " See, count," she said with a smile so sad in its expression that one could almost see the tears on her eyelids,—" see; our French grapes are not to be compared, I know, with yours of Sicily and Cyprus, but you will make allowance for our northern sun."

The count bowed, and stepped back.

" Do you refuse?" said Mercédès, in a tremulous voice.

" Pray excuse me, madame," replied Monte Cristo, " but I never eat Muscatel grapes."

Mercédès let them fall, and sighed. A magnificent peach was hanging against an adjoining wall, ripened by the same artificial heat. Mercédès drew near, and plucked the fruit. " Take this peach, then," she said.

The count again refused.

" What, again!" she exclaimed in so plaintive an accent that it seemed to suppress a sob; " really, you pain me."

A long silence succeeded this scene; the peach, like the grapes, had fallen to the ground.

" Count," said Mercédès, with a supplicating glance, " there is a beautiful Arabian custom which makes eternal friends of those who have together eaten bread and salt beneath the same roof."

" I know it, madame," replied the count; " but we are in France, and not in Arabia. And in France eternal friendships are as rare as the custom of sharing bread and salt."

" But," said the countess, breathlessly, with her eyes fixed on Monte Cristo, whose arm she convulsively pressed with both hands, " we are friends, are we not?"

The count became pale as death; the blood rushed to his heart, and then again rising, dyed his cheeks with crimson;

his eyes swam like those of a man suddenly dazzled. "Certainly, we are friends," he replied; "why should we not be?"

The answer was so little like the one Mercédès desired that she turned away to give vent to a sigh which sounded like a groan. "Thank you," she said; and they recommenced walking. They went the whole length of the garden without uttering a word. "Monsieur," suddenly exclaimed the countess, after their walk had continued ten minutes in silence, "is it true that you have seen so much, travelled so far, and suffered so deeply?"

"I have suffered deeply, madame," answered Monte Cristo.

"But now you are happy?"

"Doubtless," replied the count, "since no one hears me complain."

"And your present happiness, has it softened your heart?"

"My present happiness equals my past misery," said the count.

"Are you not married?" asked the countess.

"I married!" exclaimed Monte Cristo, shuddering; "who could have told you that?"

"No one told me you were; but you have frequently been seen at the opera with a young and lovely person."

"She is a slave whom I bought at Constantinople, madame,—the daughter of a prince. I have adopted her as my daughter, having no one else to love in the world."

"You live alone, then?"

"I live alone."

"You have no sister, no son, no father?"

"I have no one."

"How can you live so, without anything to attach you to life?"

"It is not my fault, madame. At Malta, I loved a young girl, was on the point of marrying her, when war came and carried me away. I thought she loved me well enough to wait for me, and even to remain faithful to my grave. When I returned she was married. This is the history of most men who have passed twenty years of age. Perhaps my heart was weaker than those of others, and I suffered more than they would have done in my place,—that is all the difference."

The countess stopped for a moment, as if gasping for breath. "Yes," she said, "and you have still preserved this love in your heart,—one can love but once; and did you ever see her again?"

"Never!"

"Never?"

"I never returned to the country where she lived."

"At Malta?"

"Yes, at Malta."

"She is, then, now at Malta?"

"I think so."

"And have you forgiven her for all she has made you suffer?"

"Yes, I have pardoned *her*."

"But only her; do you, then, still hate those who separated you from her?" The countess placed herself before Monte Cristo, still holding in her hand a portion of the perfumed grapes. "Take some," she said.

"Madame, I never eat Muscatel grapes," replied Monte Cristo, as if the subject had not been mentioned before.

The countess threw the grapes into the nearest thicket with a gesture of despair. "Inflexible!" she murmured. Monte Cristo remained as unmoved as if the reproach had not been addressed to him.

Albert at this moment ran in. "Oh, mother!" he exclaimed, "a great misfortune has happened!"

"What? what has happened?" asked the countess, as though awakening from a sleep to the realities of life. "Did you say a misfortune? Indeed, I should expect misfortunes."

"M. de Villefort is here."

"Well?"

"He comes to seek his wife and daughter."

"Why so?"

"Because Madame de Saint-Méran has just arrived in Paris, bringing the news of M. de Saint-Méran's death, which took place on the first stage of the journey from Marseilles. Madame de Villefort, who was in very good spirits, could not readily comprehend the calamity or believe that it had occurred; but Mademoiselle Valentine, at the first words, noticing certain precautions on the part of her father, guessed the whole truth; the blow struck her like a thunderbolt, and she fell senseless."

"And how was M. de Saint-Méran related to Mademoiselle de Villefort?" said the count.

"He was her grandfather on the mother's side. He was coming here to hasten her marriage with Franz."

"Ah, indeed!"

"Now, then," said Albert, "Franz has a reprieve; why is not M. de Saint-Méran also grandfather to Mademoiselle Danglars?"

"Albert! Albert!" said Madame de Morcerf, in a tone of mild reproof, "what are you saying? Ah, count, he esteems

you so highly, tell him that he has spoken amiss;" and she took two or three steps forward.

Monte Cristo looked at her so strangely, and with an expression so thoughtful and so full of affectionate admiration that she retraced her steps. Then she took his hand, and at the same time grasped that of her son, and joined them together. "We are friends; are we not?" she asked.

"Oh, madame, I do not presume to call myself your friend; but at all times I am your most respectful servant."

The countess went away with an indescribable pang in her heart; and before she had taken ten steps the count saw her raise her handkerchief to her eyes.

"Do not my mother and you agree?" asked Albert, astonished.

"On the contrary," replied the count, "did you not hear her declare that we were friends?"

They re-entered the drawing-room, which Valentine and Monsieur and Madame de Villefort had just left. It is unnecessary to say that Morrel had followed them.

CHAPTER LXXII

MADAME DE SAINT-MÉRAN

A GLOOMY scene had indeed occurred at the house of M. de Villefort. After the ladies had departed for the ball, whither all the entreaties of Madame de Villefort had failed in persuading him to accompany them, the *procureur du roi* had as usual shut himself up in his study, with a heap of papers calculated to alarm any one else, but which generally scarcely satisfied his vigorous appetite for work. But this time the papers were a mere matter of form. Villefort had secluded himself, not to study, but to reflect; and with the door locked, and having given orders that he should not be disturbed excepting for important business, he sat down in his armchair, and began to ponder over those events the remembrance of which had during the last week filled his mind with so many gloomy thoughts and bitter recollections. Then, instead of attacking the mass of papers piled before him, he opened the drawer of his desk, touched a spring, and drew out a parcel of notes, precious documents, among which he had carefully arranged, in characters known only to himself, the names of all those who, either in his political career, in money matters, at the bar, or in his mysterious love affairs, had become his enemies. Their number was for-

midable, now that he had begun to fear, and yet these names, powerful though they were, had often caused him to smile with the same kind of satisfaction experienced by a traveller who from the summit of a mountain beholds at his feet the craggy eminences, the almost impassable paths, and the fearful chasms along which he has so perilously climbed. When he had run over all these names in his memory, again read and studied them, commenting meanwhile upon his lists, he shook his head. "No!" he murmured, "none of my enemies would have worked patiently and laboriously for so long a time that they might now crush me with this secret. Sometimes, as Hamlet says,—

> 'Deeds will rise,
> Tho' all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes;'

but, like a phosphoric light, they rise but to mislead. The story has been told by the Corsican to some priest, who in his turn has also repeated it. M. de Monte Cristo may have heard it, and to enlighten himself—but why should he wish to enlighten himself upon the subject?" asked Villefort, after a moment's reflection. "What interest can this M. de Monte Cristo, M. Zaccone, son of a ship-owner of Malta, discoverer of a mine in Thessaly, now visiting Paris for the first time,—what interest can he take in discovering a gloomy, mysterious, and useless fact like this? However, amid all the incoherent details given to me by the Abbé Busoni and by Lord Wilmore, by that friend and that enemy, one thing appears to me to be clearly and definitely established,—that in no period, in no case, in no circumstance, could there have been any contact between him and me."

But Villefort uttered words which even he himself did not believe. He dreaded not the revelation so much, for he could reply to, or deny its truth; he cared little for that "Mene, Tekel, Phares," which appeared suddenly in letters of blood upon the wall; what he was really anxious for was to discover whose hand had traced it. At the moment when he was endeavouring to calm his fears, and when, instead of dwelling upon the political future that had so often been the subject of his ambitious dreams, he was imagining a future limited to the enjoyments of home, fearing to awaken the enemy that had so long slept, the noise of a carriage sounded in the yard; then he heard the steps of an aged person ascending the stairs, follo ed by tears and lamentations, such as servants always assume when they wish to appear interested in their master's grief. He drew back the bolt of his door, and almost immediately an old lady entered,

unannounced, carrying her shawl on her arm, and her bonnet in her hand. The white hair was thrown back from her yellow forehead, and her eyes, already sunken by the furrows of age, now almost disappeared beneath eyelids swollen with grief. "Oh, monsieur," she said,—"oh, monsieur, what a misfortune! I shall die of it; oh, yes, I shall certainly die of it!"

And then falling upon the chair nearest the door, she burst into a paroxysm of sobs. The servants, standing in the doorway, not daring to approach nearer, were looking at Noirtier's old servant, who, having heard the noise while in his master's room, had hastened to the scene and remained behind the others. Villefort rose, and ran towards his mother-in-law, for it was she. "Why, what can have happened?" he exclaimed. "What has thus disturbed you? Is not M. de Saint-Méran with you?"

"M. de Saint-Méran is dead!" answered the old marchioness, without preface, without expression; she appeared stupefied.

Villefort drew back, and clasping his hands together, exclaimed, "Dead! so suddenly?"

"A week ago," continued Madame de Saint-Méran, "we started together in the carriage after dinner. M. de Saint-Méran had been unwell for some days. Still, the idea of seeing our dear Valentine again inspired him with courage; and notwithstanding his illness, he wished to set out. When we were six leagues from Marseilles, after having eaten some of the lozenges he is accustomed to take, he fell into such a deep sleep that it appeared to me unnatural; still I hesitated to wake him, when I fancied his face became red, and that the veins in his temples throbbed more violently than usual. However, as it became dark, and I could no longer see, I let him sleep. Presently he uttered a muffled cry of distress, like that of a man suffering in his dreams, and with a sharp movement threw back his head. I stopped the postilion, I called M. de Saint-Méran, I applied my smelling-salts; but all was over, and I arrived at Aix by the side of a corpse."

Villefort stood with his mouth half open, quite stupefied. "Of course you sent for a doctor?"

"Immediately; but, as I have told you, it was too late."

"Yes; but at least he could tell of what complaint the poor marquis had died."

"Oh, yes, monsieur, he told me; it appears to have been an apoplectic stroke."

"And what did you do then?"

"M. de Saint-Méran had always expressed a desire, in case of his death happening during his absence from Paris, that his

body might be brought to the family vault. I had him put into a leaden coffin, and I am preceding him by a few days."

"Oh, poor mother!" said M. de Villefort, "to have those duties to perform after such a blow and at your age!"

"God has supported me through all! And then, the dear marquis, he would certainly have done everything for me that I performed for him. It is true that since I left him I seem to have lost my senses. I cannot weep; at my age they say that we have no more tears. Still I think that when one is in trouble we should have the power of weeping. Where is Valentine, sir? It is on her account I am here; I wish to see Valentine."

Villefort thought it would be terrible to reply that Valentine was at a ball; so he only said that she had gone out with her stepmother, and that she should be sent for.

"This instant, sir! this instant, I beseech you!" said the old lady.

Villefort placed the arm of Madame de Saint-Méran within his own, and conducted her to his apartment. "Rest yourself, mother," he said.

The marchioness raised her head at this word; and beholding the man who so forcibly reminded her of her deeply-regretted child, who still lived for her in Valentine, she felt touched at that word "mother," and bursting into tears, she fell on her knees before an armchair, in which she buried her venerable head. Villefort left her to the care of the women, while old Barrois ran, half-scared, to his master,—for nothing frightens old men so much as when death relaxes its vigilance over them for a moment in order to strike some other old man. Then, while Madame de Saint-Méran, still on her knees, remained praying fervently, Villefort sent for a carriage and went himself to bring his wife and daughter from Madame de Morcerf's. He was so pale when he appeared at the door of the ball-room, that Valentine ran to him, saying,—

"Oh, father! some misfortune has happened!"

"Your grandmamma has just arrived, Valentine," said M. de Villefort.

"And grandpapa?" inquired the young girl, trembling with apprehension.

M. de Villefort replied only by offering his arm to his daughter. It was time, for Valentine's head swam, and she staggered; Madame de Villefort instantly hastened to her assistance, and aided her husband in dragging her to the carriage, saying, "What a singular event! Who could have thought it? Ah, yes, it is indeed strange!" And the wretched family departed,

leaving a cloud of sadness hanging over the rest of the party.

At the foot of the stairs Valentine found Barrois awaiting her. "M. Noirtier wishes to see you to-night," he said in an undertone.

"Tell him I will come when I leave my dear grandmamma," she replied, feeling with true delicacy that the person to whom she could be of the most service just then was Madame de Saint-Méran.

Valentine found her grandmother in bed. Silent caresses, heartwrung sobs, broken sighs, burning tears, were all that passed in this sad interview; while Madame de Villefort, leaning on her husband's arm, maintained all outward forms of respect, at least towards the poor widow. She soon whispered to her husband, "I think it would be better for me to retire, with your permission, for the sight of me appears still to afflict your mother-in-law."

Madame de Saint-Méran heard her. "Yes, yes," she said softly to Valentine, "let her leave; but do you stay."

Madame de Villefort left, and Valentine remained alone beside the bed, for the *procureur du roi*, overcome with consternation at the unexpected death, had followed his wife. Meanwhile, Barrois had returned for the first time to old Noirtier, who, having heard the noise in the house, had, as we have said, sent his old servant to inquire the cause; on his return, his quick and intelligent eye interrogated the messenger.

"Alas, sir!" exclaimed Barrois, "a great misfortune has happened. Madame de Saint-Méran has arrived, and her husband is dead!"

M. de Saint-Méran and Noirtier had never been on strict terms of friendship; still, the death of one old man always considerably affects another. Noirtier let his head fall upon his chest, apparently overwhelmed and thoughtful; then he closed one eye.

"Mademoiselle Valentine?" said Barrois.

Noirtier nodded his head.

"She is at the ball, as you know, since she came to say good-by to you in full dress."

Noirtier again closed his left eye.

"Do you wish to see her?"

Noirtier again made an affirmative sign.

"Well, they have gone to bring her, no doubt, from Madame de Morcerf's; I will await her return, and beg her to come up here. Is that what you wish for?"

"Yes," replied the invalid.

Barrois therefore, as we have seen, watched for Valentine and informed her of her grandfather's wish. Consequently, Valentine came up to Noirtier on leaving Madame de Saint-Méran, who in the midst of her grief had at last yielded to fatigue and fallen into a feverish sleep. Within reach of her hand they placed a small table, upon which stood a bottle of orangeade, her usual beverage, and a glass. Then, as we have said, the young girl left the bedside to see M. Noirtier. Valentine kissed the old man, who looked at her with such tenderness that her eyes again filled with tears, whose sources she thought had been exhausted. The old gentleman continued to dwell upon her with the same expression.

"Yes, yes," said Valentine, "you mean that I have yet a kind grandfather left, do you not?"

The old man intimated that such was his meaning.

"Alas! happily I have," replied Valentine. "Without that, what would become of me?"

It was one o'clock in the morning. Barrois, who wished to go to bed himself, observed that after such sad events every one stood in need of rest. Noirtier would not say that the only rest he needed was to see his child, but wished her good-night, for grief and fatigue had made her appear quite ill.

The next morning Valentine found her grandmother in bed. The fever had not abated; on the contrary, her eyes glistened, and she appeared to be suffering from violent nervous irritability.

"Oh, dear grandmamma! are you worse?" exclaimed Valentine, on perceiving all these signs of agitation.

"No, my child, no!" said Madame de Saint-Méran, "but I was impatiently waiting for your arrival, that I might send for your father."

"My father?" inquired Valentine, uneasily.

"Yes; I wish to speak to him."

Valentine did not venture to oppose her grandmother's wish, the cause of which she knew not; and an instant afterwards Villefort entered.

"Monsieur," said Madame de Saint-Méran, without using any circumlocution, and as if fearing she had no time to lose, "you wrote to me that there is a project of marriage for this child?"

"Yes, madame," replied Villefort; "it is not only projected, but arranged."

"Your intended son-in-law is named M. Franz d'Epinay?"

"Yes, madame."

"Is he not the son of General d'Epinay, who was on our side,

and who was assassinated some days before the usurper returned from the Isle of Elba?"

"The same."

"Does he not dislike the idea of marrying the grand-daughter of a Jacobin?"

"Our civil dissensions are now happily extinguished, mother," said Villefort. "M. d'Epinay was quite a child when his father died; he knows very little of M. Noirtier, and will meet him, if not with pleasure, at least with indifference."

"Is it a suitable match?"

"In every respect."

"And the young man?"

"Possesses universal esteem."

"He is agreeable?"

"He is one of the most distinguished young men I know."

During the whole of this conversation Valentine had remained silent.

"Well, monsieur," said Madame de Saint-Méran, after a few minutes' reflection, "I must hasten the marriage, for I have but a short time to live."

"You, madame?" "You, dear mamma?" exclaimed M. de Villefort and Valentine at the same time.

"I know what I am saying," continued the marchioness; "I must hurry you, so that having no mother, she may at least have a grandmother to bless her marriage. I am all that is left to her belonging to my poor Renée, whom you so soon forgot, monsieur."

"Ah, madame," said Villefort, "you forget that I was obliged to give a mother to my child."

"A stepmother is never a mother, monsieur. But this is not to the purpose; our business concerns Valentine. Let us leave the dead in peace."

All this was said with such rapidity that there was something in the conversation that seemed like the beginning of delirium.

"It shall be as you wish, madame," said Villefort,—"more especially since your wishes coincide with mine; and as soon as M. d'Epinay arrives in Paris—"

"My dear mother," interrupted Valentine, "consider decorum,—the recent death. You would not have me marry under so sad auspices?"

"My child," exclaimed the old lady, sharply, "let us hear none of those conventional objections that deter weak minds from establishing firmly their future lives. I also was married

at the death-bed of my mother, and certainly I have not been less happy on that account."

"Still, that idea of death, madame!" said Villefort.

"Still?—always! I tell you I am going to die; do you understand? Well, before dying, I wish to see my son-in-law. I wish to tell him to make my child happy; I wish to read in his eyes whether he intends to obey me,—I wish to know him, in short," continued the old lady, with a fearful expression, "that I may rise from the depths of my grave and find him, if he should not fulfil his duty!"

"Madame," said Villefort, "you must lay aside these exalted ideas, which touch the border of madness. The dead, once buried in their graves, sleep there, and never rise."

"Oh, yes, yes, dear mother, calm yourself," said Valentine.

"And I tell you, monsieur, that you are mistaken. This night I have had a fearful sleep. It seemed as though my soul were already hovering over my body. My eyes, which I tried to open, closed against my will; and what will appear impossible, especially to you, monsieur, I saw with my eyes shut, in the spot where you are now standing, issuing from that corner where there is a door leading into Madame de Villefort's dressing-room,—I saw, I tell you, silently enter, a white figure."

Valentine screamed. "It was the fever that disturbed you, madame," said Villefort.

"Doubt, if you please, but I am sure of what I say. I saw a white figure; and as if to prevent my discrediting the testimony of only one of my senses, I heard my glass removed,—the same which is there now on the table."

"Oh, dear mother, it was a dream."

"So little was it a dream that I stretched my hand towards the bell; but when I did so the shade disappeared. My maid then entered with a light."

"But she saw no one?"

"Phantoms are visible to those only who ought to see them. It was the soul of my husband! Well, if my husband's soul can come to me, why should not my soul reappear to guard my granddaughter? the tie is even more direct, it seems to me."

"Oh, madame," said Villefort, deeply affected in spite of himself, "do not yield to those gloomy thoughts; you will long live with us, happy, loved, and honoured, and we will make you forget—"

"Never, never, never!" said the marchioness. "When does M. d'Epinay return?"

"We expect him every moment."

"It is well. As soon as he arrives, inform me. We must be expeditious. And then I also wish to see a notary, that I may be assured that all our property returns to Valentine."

"Ah, my mother!" murmured Valentine, pressing her lips on the burning brow of her grandmother, "do you wish to kill me? Oh, how feverish you are! We must not send for a notary, but for a doctor!"

"A doctor!" said she, shrugging her shoulders, "I am not ill; I am thirsty,—that is all."

"What are you drinking, dear mamma?"

"The same as usual, my dear; my glass is there on the table. Give it me, Valentine."

Valentine poured the orangeade into a glass, and gave it to her grandmother with a certain degree of dread, for it was the same glass, she fancied, that had been touched by the spectre. The marchioness drained the glass at a single draught, and then turned on her pillow, repeating, "The notary! the notary!"

M. de Villefort left the room, and Valentine seated herself at the bedside of her grandmother. The poor child appeared herself to require the doctor she had recommended to her aged relative. A burning spot flushed her cheek, her respiration was short and difficult, and her pulse beat with feverish excitement. She was thinking of the despair of Maximilian when informed that Madame de Saint-Méran, instead of being an ally, was unconsciously acting as his enemy. More than once she thought of revealing all to her grandmother, and she would not have hesitated a single moment if Maximilian Morrel had been named Albert de Morcerf or Raoul de Château-Renaud; but Morrel was of plebeian extraction, and Valentine knew how the haughty Marquise de Saint-Méran despised all who were not noble. Her secret had always been repressed when she was about to reveal it by the sad conviction that it would be useless to do so,—for were it once discovered by her father and mother, all would be lost.

Two hours passed thus; Madame de Saint-Méran was in a feverish sleep, and the notary had arrived. Though announced in a very low tone, Madame de Saint-Méran arose from her pillow. "The notary?" she exclaimed, "let him come in!"

The notary, who was at the door, immediately entered. "Go, Valentine," said Madame de Saint-Méran, "and leave me with this gentleman."

"But, mother—"

"Leave me! go!" The young girl kissed her grandmother, and left with her handkerchief to her eyes; at the door she found

the *valet de chambre*, who told her the doctor was waiting in the dining-room. Valentine instantly ran down. The doctor was a friend of the family, and at the same time one of the cleverest men of the day, and very fond of Valentine, whose birth he had witnessed. He had himself a daughter of about her age, whose mother had been consumptive; his life was continually disturbed by fear on account of his child.

"Oh," said Valentine, "we have been waiting for you with such impatience, dear M. d'Avrigny. But first of all, how are Madeleine and Antoinette?"

Madeleine was the daughter of M. d'Avrigny, and Antoinette his niece. M. d'Avrigny smiled sadly. "Antoinette is very well," he said, "and Madeleine tolerably so. But you sent for me, my dear child. It is not your father or Madame de Villefort who is ill? As for you, although it is obvious that we cannot get rid of our nerves, I fancy you have no further need of me than to recommend you not to allow your imagination to take too wide a field."

Valentine coloured. M. d'Avrigny carried the science of divination almost to a miracle, for he was one of those doctors who always work upon the body through the mind. "No," she replied, "it is for my poor grandmother; you know the calamity that has happened to us, do you not?"

"I know nothing," said M. Avrigny.

"Alas!" said Valentine, restraining her tears, "my grandfather is dead."

"M. de Saint-Méran?"

"Yes."

"Suddenly?"

"From an apoplectic stroke."

"An apoplectic stroke?" repeated the doctor.

"Yes; and my poor grandmother fancies that her husband, whom she never left, has called her, and that she must go and join him. Oh, M. d'Avrigny, I beseech you, do something for her!"

"Where is she?"

"In her room, with the notary."

"And M. Noirtier."

"Just as he was; his mind is perfectly clear, but he is still motionless and dumb."

"And he has the same love for you, eh, my dear child?"

"Yes," said Valentine; "he is very fond of me."

"Who does not love you?"

Valentine smiled sadly.

"What are your grandmother's symptoms?"

"An extreme nervous excitement, and a strangely agitated sleep. She fancied this morning in her sleep that her soul was hovering above her body, which she at the same time watched; it must have been delirium. She fancies too that she saw a phantom enter her chamber, and even heard the noise it made on touching her glass."

"It is singular," said the doctor; "I was not aware that Madame de Saint-Méran was subject to such hallucinations."

"It is the first time I ever saw her thus," said Valentine. "And this morning she frightened me so that I thought her mad; and my father, who, you know, is a strong-minded man, himself appeared deeply impressed."

"We will go and see," said the doctor; "what you tell me seems very strange."

The notary here descended, and Valentine was informed that her grandmother was alone. "Go upstairs," she said to the doctor.

"And you?"

"Oh, I dare not,—she forbade my sending for you; and as you say, I am myself agitated, feverish, and unwell. I will go and take a turn in the garden to recover myself."

The doctor pressed Valentine's hand; and while he went up to her grandmother, she descended the steps. We need not say which portion of the garden was her favourite walk. After remaining for a short time in the *parterre* surrounding the house, and gathering a rose to place in her waist or hair, it was her wont to turn into the dark avenue which led to the bank, and from the bank to go to the gate. As usual, Valentine strolled for a short time among her flowers, but without gathering them. The mourning in her heart forbade her assuming this simple ornament, though she had not yet had time to put on the outward semblance of woe. She then turned towards the avenue. As she advanced she fancied she heard a voice pronounce her name. She stopped, astonished; then the voice reached her ear more distinctly, and she recognised it as that of Maximilian.

CHAPTER LXXIII

THE PROMISE

It was indeed Maximilian Morrel, who had passed a wretched existence since the previous day. With the instinct peculiar to lovers, he had anticipated, after the return of Madame de Saint-Méran and the death of the marquis, that something would occur at M. de Villefort's of interest to him as Valentine's lover. His presentiments were realised, as we shall see, and it was no longer a simple uneasiness which led him, pale and trembling, to the gate under the chestnut trees. Valentine had not been informed that Morrel was waiting; and as it was not his accustomed hour for visiting her, pure chance, or rather a happy sympathy, led her at the moment to that spot. Morrel called her, and she ran to the gate. "You here at this hour?" said she.

"Yes, my poor girl," replied Morrel; "I come to bring and to hear bad tidings."

"This is indeed a house of mourning!" said Valentine; "speak, Maximilian, although the cup of sorrow seems already full."

"Dear Valentine," said Morrel, endeavouring to conceal his own emotion, "listen, I entreat you; what I am about to say is solemn. When are you to be married?"

"I will tell you all," said Valentine; "from you I have nothing to conceal. This morning the subject was introduced; and my dear grandmother, on whom I had counted as a support on whom I could rely, not only declared herself favourable to it, but is so anxious for it that they only await the arrival of M. d'Epinay, and the following day the contract will be signed."

A deep sigh escaped the young man, who gazed long and mournfully at her whom he loved. "Alas!" he said in a low voice, "it is frightful to hear such words spoken tranquilly by the woman one loves: 'The time of your execution is appointed; in a few hours it will take place. But it is of no consequence; it must be so, and I will not interfere to prevent it.' Well, since, as you say, nothing remains but for M. d'Epinay to arrive, that the contract may be signed, since on the day after his arrival you will belong to him,—to-morrow you will be engaged to M. d'Epinay, for he came this morning to Paris."

Valentine uttered a cry.

"I was at the house of Monte Cristo an hour since," said Morrel; "we were speaking, he of the sorrow your family had

experienced, and I of your grief, when a carriage rolled into the courtyard. Never till then had I placed any confidence in presentiments, but now I cannot help believing them, Valentine. At the sound of that carriage I shuddered; soon I heard steps on the staircase, which terrified me as much as the footsteps of the commander did Don Juan. The door at last opened; Albert de Morcerf entered first, and I began to discredit my fears, when after him another young man advanced, and the count exclaimed, 'Ah! M. le Baron Franz d'Epinay!' I summoned all my strength and courage to my support. Perhaps I turned pale, perhaps I trembled; but I am sure that I continued to smile with my lips. Five minutes later I departed, without having heard a word that had been spoken in those five minutes,—I was annihilated!"

"Poor Maximilian!" murmured Valentine.

"Valentine, the time has arrived when you must answer me. And remember, my life depends on your answer. What do you intend doing?"

Valentine held down her head; she was overwhelmed.

"Listen!" said Morrel; "it is not the first time you have contemplated our present position, which is a serious and urgent one. I do not think it is a moment to give way to useless sorrow; leave that for those who like to suffer at their ease and drink their tears at leisure. There are such persons in the world, and God will doubtless reward them in heaven for their resignation on earth; but those who mean to contend must not lose one precious moment, but must return immediately the blow which fortune strikes. Do you intend to struggle against our ill-fortune? Tell me, Valentine, for it is that which I have come to ask."

Valentine trembled, and stared at Morrel in terror. The idea of resisting her father, her grandmother, and all the family, had never occurred to her. "What do you say, Maximilian?" asked Valentine. "What do you term a struggle? Oh, it would be a sacrilege! What! I resist my father's order and my dying grandmother's wish? Impossible!" Morrel started. "You are too noble not to understand me, and you understand me so well that you already yield, dear Maximilian. No, no! I shall need all my strength to struggle with myself and to drink my tears, as you say. But to grieve my father; to disturb my grandmother's last moments,—never!"

"You are right," said Morrel, calmly.

"Good heavens! in what a tone you say that!" said Valentine, wounded.

"I speak as one who admires you, mademoiselle."

"Mademoiselle!" cried Valentine; "mademoiselle! Oh, selfish man! he sees me in despair, and pretends he cannot understand me!"

"You mistake; I understand you perfectly. You will not oppose M. de Villefort; you will not displease the marchioness; and to-morrow you will sign the contract which will bind you to your husband."

"But tell me, how can I do otherwise?"

"Do not appeal to me, mademoiselle. I shall be a bad judge in such a case; my selfishness will blind me," replied Morrel, whose low voice and clinched hands showed his increasing exasperation.

"What then would you have proposed, Morrel, had you found me willing to accede? Come, answer me. It is not a time to tell me I am doing wrong; you must give me your advice."

"Do you say that to me seriously, Valentine,—that I ought to advise you?"

"Certainly, dear Maximilian, for if it is good, I will follow it; you know my devotion to you."

"Valentine," said Morrel, pushing aside a plank already loose, "give me your hand in proof that you forgive my anger; my senses are confused, and during the last hour the most extravagant thoughts have passed through my brain. Oh! if you refuse my advice—"

"What do you advise?" said Valentine, raising her eyes to heaven, and sighing.

"I am free," replied Maximilian, "and rich enough to support you. I swear to make you my lawful wife before my lips shall approach your forehead."

"You make me tremble!" said the young girl.

"Follow me," said Morrel; "I will take you to my sister, who is worthy to be yours also. We will embark for Algiers, for England, for America, or if you prefer it, retire to the country and not return to Paris until our friends have reconciled your family."

Valentine shook her head. "I feared it, Maximilian," said she; "it is the counsel of a madman, and I should be more mad than you did I not stop you at once with the single word, 'Impossible, Morrel, impossible!'"

"You will then submit to what fate decrees for you without even attempting to contend against it?" said Morrel, sorrowfully.

"Yes,—if I die!"

"Well, Valentine," resumed Maximilian, "I say again, you are right. Truly, it is I who am mad; and you prove to me that passion blinds the most correct minds. I thank you therefore, who can reason without passion. It is, then, understood,—to-morrow you will be irrevocably promised to M. Franz d'Epinay, not only by that theatrical formality invented to heighten the effect of a comedy, and which is called the signing of the contract, but by your own will?"

"Again you drive me to despair, Maximilian," said Valentine; "again you turn the dagger in the wound! What would you do—tell me—if your sister listened to such a proposition?"

"Mademoiselle," replied Morrel, with a bitter smile, "I am selfish; you have already said so. And as a selfish man, I think not of what others would do in my situation, but of what I intend doing myself. I think only that I have known you now a whole year. From the day I first saw you I committed all my hopes of happiness to the possibility that I might win your love. One day you acknowledged that you loved me; and since that day my hopes have centred in the desire to possess you,—that was my life. Now, I think no more; I say only that fortune has turned against me. I had thought to gain heaven, and I have lost it. It is an every-day occurrence for a gambler to lose not only what he has, but also what he has not."

Morrel pronounced these words with perfect calmness; Valentine looked at him a moment with her large, searching eyes, endeavouring not to let Morrel discover the grief which struggled in her heart. "But, in a word, what are you going to do?" asked she.

"I am going to have the honour of saying adieu to you, mademoiselle, calling God to witness, who hears my words and who reads my secret thoughts, that I wish your life may be so calm, so happy, and so fully occupied, that there may be no place in it for remembrance of me."

"Oh!" murmured Valentine.

"Adieu, Valentine, adieu!" said Morrel, bowing.

"Where are you going?" cried the young girl, extending her hand through the opening, and seizing Maximilian by his coat, for she understood from her own agitated feelings that her lover's calmness could not be real,—"where are you going?"

"I am going to take a course by which I shall avoid bringing additional trouble into your family, and to set an example which every honest and devoted man, situated as I am, may follow."

"Before you leave me, tell me what you are going to do, Maximilian."

The young man smiled sorrowfully.

"Speak! speak!" said Valentine; "I entreat you."

"Has your resolution changed, Valentine?"

"It cannot change, unhappy man! you know it must not!" cried the young girl.

"Then adieu, Valentine!"

Valentine shook the gate with an energy of which she would have been thought incapable, and as Morrel was going away, she thrust both her hands through the opening, clasping them and turning her arms. "I must know what you mean to do?" said she. "Where are you going?"

"Oh, fear not!" said Maximilian, stopping at a short distance; "I do not intend to render another man responsible for the rigorous fate reserved for me. Another might threaten to seek M. Franz, to provoke him, and to fight with him; all that would be folly. What has M. Franz to do with it? He saw me this morning for the first time, and has already forgotten he has seen me. He did not even know that I was in existence when it was arranged by your two families that you should be united. I have no enmity against M. Franz, and promise you the punishment shall not fall on him."

"On whom, then,—on me?"

"On you, Valentine? Oh, Heaven forbid! Woman is sacred; the woman one loves is holy."

"On yourself, then, unhappy man,—on yourself?"

"I am the only guilty person, am I not?" replied Maximilian.

"Maximilian!" said Valentine, "Maximilian, return, I entreat you!"

He drew near, with his sweet smile, and but for his paleness one might have thought him in his usual happy frame. "Listen, my dear, my adored Valentine," said he, in his melodious and grave tone; "those who, like us, have never had a thought for which they need blush before the world, before their family friends, or before God, are able to read in one another's hearts as in an open book. I never was romantic, and am no melancholy hero. I imitate neither Manfred nor Anthony; but without words, without protestations, and without vows, my life has entwined itself with yours. You leave me, and you are right in doing so,—I repeat it, you are right; but in losing you, I lose my life. The moment you leave me, Valentine, I am alone in the world. My sister is happily married; her husband is only my brother-in-law,—that is, a man whom the ties of social life

alone attach to me. No one, then, longer needs my useless life. This is what I shall do: I will wait until the very moment you are married, for I will not lose the shadow of one of those unexpected chances which are sometimes reserved for us,—for after all, M. Franz may die before that time. A thunderbolt may fall on the altar as you approach it; nothing appears impossible to one condemned to die, and miracles appear quite reasonable when his escape from death is concerned. I will, then, wait until the last moment, and when my misery is certain, irremediable, hopeless, I will write a confidential letter to my brother-in-law, another to the prefect of police, to acquaint them with my intention; and at the corner of some wood, on the brink of some abyss, on the bank of some river, I will put an end to my existence, as certainly as I am the son of the most honest man who ever lived in France."

Valentine trembled convulsively; she loosed her hold of the gate, her arms fell by her side, and two large tears rolled down her cheeks. The young man stood before her, sorrowful and resolute.

"Oh! for pity's sake," said she, "you will live, will you not?"

"No! on my honour," said Maximilian; "but that will not affect you. You will have done your duty, and your conscience will be at rest."

Valentine fell on her knees and pressed her almost bursting heart. "Maximilian!" said she, "Maximilian, my friend, my brother on earth, my true husband in heaven, I entreat you, do as I do, live in suffering; perhaps we may one day be united."

"Adieu, Valentine," repeated Morrel.

"My God," said Valentine, raising both her hands to heaven with a sublime expression, "I have done my utmost to remain a submissive daughter,—I have begged, entreated, implored; he has regarded neither my prayers, my entreaties, nor my tears. It is done," cried she, wiping away her tears, and resuming her firmness; "I am resolved not to die of remorse, I will rather die of shame. You will live, Maximilian, and I will belong to no one but you. At what hour? At what moment? Shall it be immediately? Speak, command! I am ready."

Morrel, who had already gone some steps away, again returned, and pale with joy, extended both hands towards Valentine through the opening. "Valentine," said he, "dear Valentine, you must not speak thus,—rather let me die. Why should I obtain you by violence, if our love is mutual? Is it from mere humanity you bid me live? I would then rather die."

"Truly," murmured Valentine, "who on this earth cares for me, if he does not? Who has consoled me in my sorrow but he? On whom do my hopes rest? On whom does my bleeding heart repose? On him, on him; always on him! Yes, you are right; Maximilian, I will follow you. I will leave the paternal home, I will give up all. Oh, ungrateful girl that I am," cried Valentine, sobbing, "I will give up all, even my dear old grandfather, whom I had forgotten."

"No," said Maximilian, "you shall not leave him. M. Noirtier has evinced, you say, a kind feeling towards me. Well, before you leave, tell him all; his consent would be your justification in God's sight. As soon as we are married, he shall come and live with us; instead of one child, he shall have two. You have told me how you talk to him and how he answers you; I shall very soon learn that language by signs, Valentine. Oh, I promise you solemnly that instead of despair, it is happiness that awaits us."

"Oh, see, Maximilian, see the power you have over me! You almost make me believe you; and yet what you tell me is madness, for my father will curse me. He is inflexible,—he will never pardon me. Now listen to me, Maximilian; if by artifice, by entreaty, by accident,—in short, if by any means I can delay this marriage, will you wait?"

"Yes, I promise you, as you also promise me, that this horrible marriage shall not take place, and that if you are dragged before a magistrate or a priest, you will refuse."

"I swear it to you by that which is most sacred to me in the world,—by my mother."

"We will wait, then," said Morrel.

"Yes, we will wait," replied Valentine, who revived at these words; "there are so many things which may save unhappy beings such as we are."

"I rely on you, Valentine," said Morrel; "all that you do will be well done. Only if they disregard your prayers, if your father and Madame de Saint-Méran insist that M. d'Epinay should be called to-morrow to sign the contract—"

"Then you have my promise, Morrel."

"Instead of signing—"

"I will rejoin you, and we will fly; but from this moment until then, let us not tempt Providence, Morrel; let us not see each other. It is a miracle, it is a providence that we have not been discovered; if we were surprised, if it were known that we meet thus, we should have no further resource."

"You are right, Valentine; but how shall I ascertain—"

"From the notary, M. Deschamps."

"I know him."

"And from me; I will write to you, depend on me. I dread this marriage, Maximilian, as much as you do."

"Thank you, my adored Valentine, thank you; that is enough. When once I know the hour, I will hasten to this spot; you can easily get over this fence with my assistance, a carriage will await us at the gate, in which you will accompany me to my sister's. There living, retired or mingling in society, as you wish, we shall be enabled to use our power to resist oppression, and will not suffer ourselves to be put to death like sheep, which defend themselves only by sighs."

"Agreed," said Valentine. "I will say to you as you said to me: Maximilian, all that you do will be well done."

"Oh!"

"Well! are you satisfied with your wife?" asked the young girl, sorrowfully.

"My adored Valentine, to say yes is to say but little."

"Say it, however."

Valentine had approached, or rather had placed her lips so near the fence that they nearly touched those of Morrel, which were pressed against the other side of the cold and inexorable barrier.

"Good-by, then, till we meet again," said Valentine, tearing herself away.

"I shall hear from you?"

"Yes."

"Thanks, thanks, dear love, good-by!" The sound of a kiss, innocent and wasted, was heard; and Valentine fled through the avenue. Morrel listened to catch the last sound of her dress brushing the branches, and of her footstep on the path, then raised his eyes with an ineffable smile of thankfulness to heaven for being permitted to be thus loved; and then he also disappeared. The young man returned home and waited all the evening and all the next day without receiving anything. It was only on the following day, at about ten o'clock in the morning, as he was starting to call on M. Deschamps, the notary, that he received from the postman a small billet, which he knew to be from Valentine, although he had not before seen her writing. It was to this effect:—

Tears, entreaties, prayers, have availed me nothing. Yesterday, for two hours, I was at the church of St. Philippe du Roule, and for two hours I prayed to God from the depths of my soul. Heaven is as inflexible as man; and the signing of the contract is appointed

for this evening at nine o'clock. I have but one promise and but one heart to give. That promise is pledged to you; that heart is yours. This evening, then, at quarter of nine, at the gate.—Your betrothed, VALENTINE DE VILLEFORT.

P.S.—My poor grandmother gets worse and worse. Yesterday her fever amounted to delirium; to-day her delirium is almost madness. You will be very kind to me, will you not, Morrel, to make me forget my sorrow in leaving her thus? I think it is kept a secret from Grandpapa Noirtier that the contract is to be signed this evening.

Morrel was not satisfied with the information received from Valentine; he went to the notary, who confirmed to him the news that the signing of the contract was to take place at nine o'clock that evening. Then he went to call on Monte Cristo, and heard still more. Franz had been to announce the solemnity, and Madame de Villefort had also written to beg the count to excuse her not inviting him; the death of M. de Saint-Méran and the dangerous illness of his widow would cast a gloom over the meeting which she would regret that the count should share, whom she wished might enjoy every happiness. The day before, Franz had been presented to Madame de Saint-Méran, who had left her bed to receive him, but had been obliged to return to it immediately after. It is easy to suppose that Morrel's agitation would not escape the count's penetrating eye. And therefore Monte Cristo was more affectionate than ever; indeed, his manner was so kind that several times Morrel was on the point of telling him all. But he recalled the promise he had made to Valentine, and kept his secret. The young man read Valentine's letter twenty times in the course of the day. It was her first; and on what an occasion! Each time he read it he renewed his vow to make her happy. How great is the authority of a young girl who has made so courageous a resolution! What devotion does she deserve from him to whom she has sacrificed everything! How ought she to be, in fact, to her lover the first and most worthy object of his worship! She becomes at once a queen and a wife; and it is impossible to thank and love her sufficiently. Morrel thought with indescribable agitation of the moment when Valentine should draw near, saying, "Here I am, Maximilian; take me." He had arranged everything for her escape: two ladders were hidden in the clover-field; a cabriolet which Maximilian himself was to drive was in waiting,—without a servant, without lights; at the turning of the first street they would light the lamps, as it would be foolish to attract the notice of the police by too many precautions. Occasionally he

shuddered; he thought of the moment when from the top of that wall he should protect the descent of Valentine, and when he should hold her, trembling and unresisting, in his arms,—her whose hand only he had pressed, and whom he had kissed only on the tips of her fingers.

When the afternoon arrived, and he saw that the hour was drawing near, he wished for solitude. His blood boiled; the trivial questions, even the voice alone, of a friend would have irritated him. He shut himself in his room, and tried to read; but his eye glanced over the page without recognising the words, and finally he threw away the book, and for the second time sat down to sketch his plan, the ladders, and the fence. At length the hour was at hand. Never did a man deeply in love allow the clocks to go on peacefully. Morrel tormented his so effectually that they indicated half-past eight at six o'clock. He then said, "It is time to start; the signature was indeed fixed to take place at nine o'clock, but perhaps Valentine will not wait for that." Consequently, Morrel, having left the Rue Meslay at half-past eight by his timepiece, entered the clover-field while the clock of St. Philippe du Roule was striking eight. The horse and cabriolet were concealed behind a small ruin, where Morrel had often waited. The night gradually drew on, and the foliage in the garden assumed a deeper hue. Then Morrel came out from his hiding-place with a beating heart, and looked through the small opening in the paling; there was no one to be seen. The clock struck half-past eight; and still another half-hour was passed in waiting, while Morrel looked to and fro, and gazed more and more frequently through the opening. The garden became darker still, but in the darkness he looked in vain for the white dress; and in the silence he vainly listened for the sound of footsteps. The house, which was discernible through the trees, remained in darkness, and gave no indication that so important an event as the signature of a marriage-contract was going on. Morrel looked at his watch, which indicated quarter of ten; but soon the same clock he had already heard strike two or three times rectified the error of his watch by striking half-past nine. This was already half an hour after the time Valentine had herself appointed. It was a terrible moment for the young man's heart, on which each second fell like a leaden mallet. The slightest rustling of the foliage, the least whistling of the wind attracted his attention and drew the perspiration to his brow; then he tremblingly fixed his ladder, and not to lose a moment, placed his foot on the first step. Amid all these alternations of hope and fear,

the clock struck ten. "It is impossible," said Maximilian, "that the signing of a contract should occupy so long a time, without unexpected interruptions. I have weighed all the chances, calculated the time required for all the forms; something has happened." And then he walked rapidly to and fro, and pressed his burning forehead against the fence. Had Valentine fainted after the signing of the contract; or had she been discovered and stopped in her flight? These were the only explanations the young man could conjecture,—both of them without hope.

The idea which fixed his attention was that Valentine's strength had failed her in attempting to escape, and that she had fainted in one of the paths. "Oh! if that is the case," he cried, running up to the top of the ladder, "I should lose her, and by my own fault." The demon which had whispered that idea to him did not leave him, and buzzed in his ear with a persistence which after a moment changed surmises to convictions. His eyes, searching the increasing darkness, seemed to perceive something lying on the shaded path. He ventured to call, and it seemed to him that the wind wafted back an inarticulate sigh. At last the half-hour struck. It was impossible to wait longer. His temples throbbed violently; his eyes were growing dim. He passed one leg over the wall, and in a moment leaped down on the other side. He was on Villefort's premises, had arrived there by scaling the wall. What might be the consequences? However, he had not ventured thus far to draw back. He went a short distance close under the wall, then crossed a path, and entered a clump of trees. In a moment he had passed through them, and could see the house distinctly. Then Morrel was convinced of one thing; instead of lights at every window, as is customary on days of ceremony, he saw only a grey mass, which was veiled also by a cloud, which at that moment obscured the moon's feeble light. A light moved rapidly from time to time past three windows of the first floor. These three windows were in Madame de Saint-Méran's room. Another remained motionless behind some red curtains which were in Madame de Villefort's bedroom. Morrel understood all this. So many times, in order to follow Valentine in thought at every hour in the day, had he made her describe all the house that without having seen it, he knew it all.

This darkness and silence alarmed Morrel still more than Valentine's absence had done. Almost mad with grief, and determined to venture everything in order to see Valentine once more, and to assure himself in regard to the misfortune he

feared, Morrel gained the edge of the clump of trees, and was going to pass as quickly as possible through the flower-garden, when the sound of a voice still at some distance, but which was borne upon the wind, reached him. At this sound, as he was already partially exposed to view, he stepped back and concealed himself completely, remaining motionless and still. He had formed his resolution; if it was Valentine alone, he would speak as she passed; if she was accompanied, and he could not speak, still he should see her and know that she was safe; if they were strangers, he would listen to their conversation, and might understand something of this hitherto incomprehensible mystery.

The moon had just then escaped from behind the cloud which had concealed it, and Morrel saw Villefort come out upon the steps, followed by a gentleman in black. They descended, and advanced towards the clump of trees, and Morrel soon recognised the other gentleman as Dr. d'Avrigny. On seeing them approach, he drew back mechanically, until he found himself stopped by a sycamore tree in the centre of the clump; there he was compelled to remain. Soon the two gentlemen stopped also.

"Ah, my dear doctor," said the *procureur*, "Heaven declares itself against my house! What a dreadful death; what a blow! Seek not to console me! Alas! nothing can alleviate so great a sorrow; the wound is too deep and too fresh! She is dead! she is dead!"

A cold dampness covered the young man's brow, and his teeth chattered. Who, then, was dead in that house, which Villefort himself had called accursed?

"My dear M. de Villefort," replied the doctor, with a tone which redoubled the terror of the young man, "I have not led you here to console you; on the contrary—"

"What can you mean?" asked the *procureur*, alarmed.

"I mean that behind the misfortune which has just happened to you, there is another, perhaps still greater."

"Oh, my God!" murmured Villefort, clasping his hands. "What are you going to tell me?"

"Are we quite alone, my friend?"

"Yes, quite; but why all these precautions?"

"Because I have a terrible secret to communicate to you," said the doctor. "Let us sit down."

Villefort fell, rather than seated himself. The doctor stood before him, with one hand placed on his shoulder. Morrel, horrified, supported his head with one hand, and with the other pressed his heart, lest its beatings should be heard. "Dead!

dead!" repeated he within himself; and he felt as if he were also dying.

"Speak, doctor! I am listening," said Villefort; "strike! I am prepared for everything!"

"Madame de Saint-Méran was doubtless advancing in years, but she enjoyed excellent health."

Morrel, for the first time in ten minutes, breathed freely.

"Grief has consumed her," said Villefort,—"yes, grief, doctor! After living forty years with the marquis—"

"It is not grief, my dear Villefort," said the doctor; "grief may kill, although it rarely does, but never in a day, never in an hour, never in ten minutes."

Villefort answered nothing; he simply raised his head, which had been cast down before, and looked at the doctor with amazement.

"Were you present during the last struggle?" asked M. d'Avrigny.

"I was," replied the *procureur*; "you begged me not to leave."

"Did you notice the symptoms of the disease to which Madam de Saint-Méran has fallen a victim?"

"I did. Madame de Saint-Méran had three successive attacks at intervals of some minutes, each one more serious than the former. When you arrived, Madame de Saint-Méran had already been panting for breath some minutes. She then had a fit, which I took to be simply a nervous attack; and it was only when I saw her raise herself in the bed, and her limbs and neck appear stiffened, that I became really alarmed. Then I understood from your countenance there was more to fear than I had thought. This crisis past, I endeavoured to catch your eye, but could not. You held her hand,—you were feeling her pulse,—and the second fit came on before you had turned towards me. This was more terrible than the first; the same nervous movements were repeated, and the mouth contracted and turned purple."

"And at the third she expired."

"At the end of the first attack I discovered symptoms of tetanus; you confirmed my opinion."

"Yes, before others," replied the doctor; "but now we are alone."

"Oh, heavens! what are you going to tell me?"

"That the symptoms of tetanus and poisoning by vegetable substances are the same."

M. de Villefort started from his seat, then in a moment fell

down again, silent and motionless. Morrel knew not if he were dreaming or awake.

"Listen," said the doctor; "I know the full importance of the statement I have just made, and the character of the man to whom I have made it."

"Do you speak to me as a magistrate or as a friend?" asked Villefort.

"As a friend, and only as a friend, at this moment. The similarity in the symptoms of tetanus and poisoning by vegetable substances is so great that were I obliged to affirm by oath what I have now stated, I should hesitate; I therefore repeat to you, I speak not to a magistrate, but to a friend. And to that friend I say, during the three-quarters of an hour that the struggle continued I watched the agony, the convulsions, the death of Madame de Saint-Méran, and I am not only satisfied that she died of poison, but I could name,—yes, I could name the poison that killed her."

"Monsieur! Monsieur!"

"The symptoms are marked, do you see?—sleep disturbed by nervous fits, excitement of the brain, torpor of the system. Madame de Saint-Méran has sunk under a violent dose of brucine or of strychnine, which by some mistake, perhaps, has been given to her."

Villefort seized the doctor's hand. "Oh, it is impossible!" said he; "I must be dreaming! It is frightful to hear such things from such a man as you! Tell me, I entreat you, my dear doctor, that you are perhaps in error."

"Doubtless I may be, but—"

"But?"

"But I do not think so."

"Have pity on me, doctor! So many dreadful things have happened to me lately that I think I am on the verge of madness."

"Has any one besides me seen Madame de Saint-Méran?"

"No one."

"Has anything been sent for from a chemist's that I have not examined?"

"Nothing."

"Had Madame de Saint-Méran any enemies?"

"Not to my knowledge."

"Has any one an interest in her death?"

"No, indeed! My God! no, indeed! My daughter is her only heiress,—Valentine alone. Oh, if such a thought came to me, I would stab myself to punish my heart for having for one instant harboured it."

"Indeed, my dear friend," said M. d'Avrigny, "I would not accuse any one; I speak only of an accident, you understand,—a mistake. But whether accident or mistake, the fact is there; it speaks to my conscience and compels me to speak aloud to you. Make inquiry."

"Of whom? how? of what?"

"May not Barrois, the old servant, have made a mistake, and have given Madame de Saint-Méran a dose prepared for his master?"

"For my father?"

"Yes."

"But how could a medicine prepared for M. Noirtier poison Madame de Saint-Méran?"

"Nothing is more simple. You know poisons become remedies in certain diseases; paralysis is one of those diseases. For instance, having tried every other remedy to restore movement and speech to M. Noirtier, I resolved to try one last means, and for three months I have been giving him brucine; so that in the last dose I ordered for him there were six centigrammes. This quantity, which is without effect upon the paralysed frame of M. Noirtier,—which, too, has become gradually accustomed to it,—would be sufficient to kill another person."

"My dear doctor, there is no communication between M. Noirtier's apartment and that of Madame de Saint-Méran, and Barrois never entered my mother-in-law's room. In short, doctor, although I know you to be the most skilful physician and the most conscientious man in the world, and although in all circumstances your word is for me a guiding light as clear as sunlight,—well, doctor, notwithstanding that trust in you, I must fall back upon the axiom, *errare humanum est.*"

"Listen, Villefort," said the doctor; "is there one of my brethren in whom you have as much confidence as in myself?"

"Why do you ask me that? What do you wish?"

"Send for him; I will tell him what I have seen and we will consult together and examine the body."

"And you wll find traces of poison?"

"No, not of poison,—I have not said we could do that,—but we shall establish the excited condition of the nervous system. We shall discover the obvious, indisputable asphyxia; and we shall say to you: Dear Villefort, if this thing arises from negligence, watch over your servants; if from hatred, watch your enemies."

"What do you propose to me, D'Avrigny?" said Villefort,

in despair. "So soon as another is admitted into our secret, an inquest will become necessary; and an inquest in my house —impossible! Still," continued the *procureur*, looking at the doctor with uneasiness, "if you wish it, if you insist upon it, it shall be done. In fact, perhaps I ought to push that inquiry; my position devolves on me this obligation. But, doctor, you see me already so grieved—how can I introduce into my house so much scandal, after so much sorrow? My wife and my daughter would die of it! And I—doctor, you know that one does not arrive at the post I occupy—one has not been *procureur du roi* twenty-five years—without having made some enemies; mine are numerous. This affair, once got abroad, will be for them a triumph which will make them leap for joy, and it will cover me with shame. Pardon me, doctor, these worldly ideas! Were you a priest I should not dare tell you that; but you are a man, and you know mankind. Doctor, doctor, let it be as if you had told me nothing."

"My dear M. de Villefort," replied the doctor, "my first duty is humanity. I would have saved Madame de Saint-Méran if science could have done it; but she is dead,—my duty regards the living. Let us bury this terrible secret in the deepest recesses of our hearts; I am willing, if any one should suspect this, that my silence on this subject should be imputed to my ignorance. Meanwhile, monsieur, watch always; watch diligently,—for perhaps the evil may not stop here. And when you have found the culprit, if you find him, I will say to you, You are a magistrate, do as you will!"

"I thank you, doctor," said Villefort, with indescribable joy; "I never had a better friend than you." And as if he feared Dr. d'Avrigny would recall his promise, he hurried him towards the house.

When they were gone Morrel ventured out from under the trees, and the moon shone upon his face, which was so pale that he might have been taken for a ghost. "God protects me in an obvious, but terrible manner," said he. "But Valentine, poor girl! how will she bear so much sorrow?"

As he said these words, he looked alternately at the window with red curtains and the three windows with white curtains. The light had almost disappeared from the former; doubtless Madame de Villefort had just put out her lamp, and the night lamp alone reflected its dull light on the window. At the extremity of the building, on the contrary, he saw one of the three windows open. A wax-light placed on the mantel-piece threw some of its pale rays without, and a shadow was seen for

one moment on the balcony. Morrel shuddered; he thought he heard a sob.

It cannot be wondered at that his mind, generally so courageous, but now disturbed by the two strongest human passions, love and fear, was weakened even to the indulgence of superstitious thoughts. Although it was impossible Valentine could see him, hidden as he was, he thought he heard the shadow at the window call him. His disturbed mind told him so; his glowing heart repeated it. This double error became an irresistible reality; and by one of those incomprehensible transports of youth, he bounded from his hiding-place, and with two strides, at the risk of being seen, at the risk of alarming Valentine, at the risk of being discovered by some exclamation which might escape the young girl, he crossed the flower-garden, which by the light of the moon resembled a large white lake, and having passed the rows of orange-trees which extended in front of the house, he reached the step, ran quickly up, and pushed the door, which opened without resistance. Valentine had not seen him; her eyes, raised towards heaven, were watching a silvery cloud gliding over the azure. Its form was that of a shadow mounting towards heaven; her poetic and excited mind pictured it as the soul of her grandmother. Meanwhile, Morrel had traversed the ante-room and found the staircase, which being carpeted prevented his approach being heard; and besides, he had reached such a pitch of exaltation that the presence of M. de Villefort even would not have alarmed him. Had he encountered him, his resolution was formed; he would have approached him and acknowledged all, begging him to excuse and sanction the love which united him to his daughter, and his daughter to him. Morrel was mad. Happily he did not meet any one. Now especially did he find the description Valentine had given of the interior of the house useful to him; he arrived safely at the top of the staircase, and while at that point he paused in doubt, a sob indicated the direction he was to take. He turned back; a door partly open enabled him to see the reflection of a light, and to hear the sorrowing voice. He pushed it open and entered. At the other end of the room, under a white sheet which covered its head and showed the outline of its form, lay the dead body, especially appalling in the eyes of Morrel since the revelation of the secret which by chance he had overheard. By the side of the bed, on her knees, and her head buried in the cushion of an easy-chair, was Valentine, trembling and sobbing, her hands extended above her head, clasped and stiff. She had turned from the window,

which remained open, and was praying in accents that would have affected the most unfeeling; her words were rapid, incoherent, unintelligible,—for the burning weight of grief almost stopped her utterance. The moon shining through the open blinds made the lamp appear to burn paler, and cast a sepulchral hue over that scene of desolation. Morrel could not resist this; he was not exemplary for piety, he was not easily impressed, but Valentine suffering, weeping, wringing her hands before him, was more than he could bear in silence. He sighed and whispered a name; and the head bathed in tears and pressed on the velvet cushion of the chair—a head resembling the Magdalen of Correggio—was raised and turned towards him. Valentine perceived him without any sign of surprise. A heart overwhelmed with one great grief is insensible to minor emotions. Morrel held out his hand to her. Valentine, as her only excuse for not having met him, pointed to the corpse under the sheet and began to sob again. Neither dared for some time to speak in that room. They hesitated to break the silence which death seemed to impose; at length Valentine ventured.

"My friend," said she, "how came you here? Alas! I would say you are welcome, had not death opened the way for you into this house."

"Valentine," said Morrel, with a trembling voice, "I had waited since half-past eight, and did not see you come; I became uneasy, leaped the wall, found my way through the garden, when voices conversing about the fatal event—"

"What voices?" asked Valentine.

Morrel shuddered,—for all the conversation of the doctor and M. de Villefort came to his remembrance, and he thought he could see through the sheet the extended hands, the stiff neck, and the purple lips. "The voices of your servants," said he, "told me all."

"But to come here is to ruin everything, my friend," said Valentine, without fear, and without anger.

"Forgive me," replied Morrel, in the same tone; "I will go away."

"No," said Valentine, "you might meet some one; stay!"

"But if any one should come here?"

The young girl shook her head. "No one will come," said she; "do not fear, there is our safeguard," pointing to the bed.

"But what has become of M. d'Epinay?" replied Morrel.

"M. Franz arrived to sign the contract just as my dear grandmother was dying."

" Alas!" said Morrel, with a feeling of selfish joy,—for he thought this death would cause the wedding to be postponed indefinitely.

" But what redoubles my sorrow," continued the young girl, as if this feeling must be punished instantly, " is that this poor dear grandmamma, on her death-bed, requested the marriage might take place as soon as possible; she also,—my God!—she also, thinking to protect me, took part against me."

" Hark!" said Morrel.

They both listened; steps were distinctly heard in the corridor and on the stairs.

" It is my father, who has just left his cabinet," said Valentine.

" To accompany the doctor to the door," added Morrel.

" How do you know it is the doctor?" asked Valentine, astonished.

" I imagine it must be," said Morrel.

Valentine looked at the young man. They heard the street door close; then M. de Villefort locked the garden door and returned upstairs. He stopped a moment in the ante-room, as if hesitating whether to turn to his own apartment or to Madame de Saint-Méran's. Morrel concealed himself behind a door. Valentine remained motionless; grief seemed to deprive her of all fear. M. de Villefort passed on to his own room.

" Now," said Valentine, " you can go out neither by the front door nor by the garden." Morrel looked at her with astonishment. " There is but one way left you that is safe," said she; " it is through my grandfather's room." She rose; " Come," she added.

Where?" asked Maximilian.

' To my grandfather's room."

I in M. Noirtier's apartment?"

' Yes."

' Can you mean it, Valentine?"

' I have long wished it. He is my only remaining friend, and we both need his help; come."

" Be careful, Valentine," said Morrel, hesitating to comply with the young girl's wishes; " I now see my error; I acted as a madman in coming in here. Are you sure you are more reasonable?"

" Yes," said Valentine; " and I have but one scruple,—that of leaving my dear grandmother's remains, which I had undertaken to watch."

" Valentine," said Morrel, " death is in itself sacred."

" Yes," said Valentine; " besides, it will be for only a short

time." She then crossed the corridor, and led the way down a narrow staircase to M. Noirtier's room; Morrel followed her on tiptoe. At the door they found the old servant.

"Barrois," said Valentine, "shut the door, and let no one come in." She entered first.

Noirtier, seated in his chair, and listening to every sound, was watching the door; he saw Valentine, and his eye brightened. There was something grave and solemn in the appearance of the young girl which struck the old man, and immediately his bright eye began to interrogate.

"Dear grandfather," said Valentine, hurriedly, "you know poor grandmamma died an hour since, and now I have no friend in the world but you."

An expression of infinite tenderness came to the eyes of the old man.

"It is, then, to you alone, is it not, that I ought to confide my sorrows and my hopes?"

The paralytic made an affirmative sign.

Valentine took Maximilian's hand. "Look attentively, then, at this gentleman." The old man fixed his searching gaze with slight astonishment on Morrel. "It is M. Maximilian Morrel," said she; "the son of that good merchant of Marseilles, of whom you have doubtless heard."

"Yes," said the old man.

"It is an irreproachable name, which Maximilian is likely to render glorious, since at thirty years of age he is a captain, and an officer of the Legion of Honour."

The old man signified that he recollected him.

"Well, grandpapa," said Valentine, kneeling before him, and pointing to Maximilian, "I love him, and will be only his; were I compelled to marry another, I would destroy myself."

The eyes of the paralytic expressed a multitude of tumultuous thoughts.

"You like M. Maximilian Morrel, do you not, grandpapa?" asked Valentine.

"Yes," said the motionless old man.

"And you will protect us, who are your children, against the will of my father?"

Noirtier cast an intelligent glance at Morrel, as if to say, "That depends."

Maximilian understood him. "Mademoiselle," said he, "you have a sacred duty to fulfil in your deceased grandmother's room; will you allow me the honour of a few minutes' conversation with M. Noirtier?"

"That is it," said the old man's eye. Then he looked anxiously at Valentine.

"Do you fear he will not understand you, dear grandpapa?"

"Yes."

"Oh! we have so often spoken of you that he knows exactly how I talk to you." Then turning to Maximilian with an adorable smile, although shaded by sorrow, "He knows everything I know," said she.

Valentine rose, placed a chair for Morrel, requested Barrois not to admit any one, and having tenderly embraced her grandpapa, and sorrowfully taken leave of Morrel, she went away. To prove to Noirtier that he was in Valentine's confidence and knew all their secrets, Morrel took the dictionary, a pen, and some paper, and placed them all on a table where there was a light.

"But first," said Morrel, "allow me, monsieur, to tell you who I am, how much I love Mademoiselle Valentine, and what are my designs respecting her."

Noirtier made a sign that he would listen. It was an imposing spectacle,—this old man, apparently a useless burden, becoming the sole protector, support, and adviser of the lovers, who were both young, beautiful, and strong. His remarkably noble and austere expression struck Morrel, who began his recital with trembling. He related the manner in which he had become acquainted with Valentine, and how he had loved her; and that Valentine, in her solitude and unhappiness, had accepted the offer of his devotion. He told him of his birth, his position, his fortune; and more than once when he consulted the look of the paralytic, that look answered, "That is good; proceed."

"And now," said Morrel, when he had finished the first part of his recital,—"now I have told you of my love and my hopes. may I inform you of our plans?"

"Yes," signified the old man.

"This was our resolution: a cabriolet was in waiting at the gate, in which I intended to carry off Valentine to my sister's house to marry her, and to await, in an attitude of respectful expectation, M. de Villefort's pardon."

"No," said Noirtier.

"We must not do so?"

"No."

"You do not sanction our project?"

"No."

"There is another way," said Morrel.

The old man's interrogative eye said, "What?"

"I will go," continued Maximilian, "I will go and find M.

Franz d'Epinay,—I am happy to be able to say this in Mademoiselle de Villefort's absence,—and will conduct myself towards him so as to compel him to act as a man of honour."

Noirtier's look continued to interrogate.

"You wish to know what I will do?"

"Yes."

"I will find him, as I told you; I will tell him of the ties which bind me to Mademoiselle Valentine. If he be a sensible man, he will prove it by renouncing of his own accord the hand of his betrothed, and will secure my friendship and love until death; if he refuse, either through interest or ridiculous pride, after I have proved to him that he would be forcing my wife from me, that Valentine loves me, and will love no other, I will fight with him, give him every advantage, and I shall kill him, or he will kill me. If I am victorious, he will not marry Valentine; and if I die, I am very sure Valentine will not marry him."

Noirtier watched with indescribable pleasure this noble and sincere countenance, on which every sentiment his tongue uttered was depicted, adding by the expression of his fine features all that colouring adds to a sound and faithful drawing. Still, when Morrel had finished, he shut his eyes several times, which was his manner of saying "No."

"No?" said Morrel; "you disapprove of this second project, as you did of the first?"

"I do," signified the old man.

"But what must then be done, monsieur?" asked Morrel. "Madame de Saint-Méran's last request was that the marriage might not be delayed; must I let things take their course?"

Noirtier did not move.

"I understand," said Morrel; "I am to wait."

"Yes."

"But delay will ruin us, monsieur," replied the young man. "Alone, Valentine has no power; she will be compelled to submit. I am here almost miraculously, and can scarcely hope for so good an opportunity to occur again. Believe me, there are only the two plans I have proposed to you; forgive my vanity, and tell me which you prefer. Do you authorise Mademoiselle Valentine to intrust herself to my honour?"

"No."

"Do you prefer I should seek M. d'Epinay?"

"No."

"But, good heavens! whence will come the succour we believe that Providence will send?"

The old man smiled with his eyes, as he was accustomed to smile when any one spoke to him of Providence. There was always a little atheism in the ideas of the old Jacobin.

"From chance?" continued Morrel.

"No."

"From you?"

"Yes."

"You thoroughly understand me, monsieur? Pardon my eagerness, for my life depends on your answer. Will our help come from you?"

"Yes."

"You are sure of it?"

"Yes."

There was so much firmness in the look which gave this answer that there could be no doubt of his will, at least, though there might be of his power.

"Oh, thank you a thousand times! But how, unless a miracle should restore your speech, your gesture, your movement,—how can you, chained to that armchair, dumb and motionless, oppose this marriage?"

A smile lit up the old man's face,—a strange smile of the eyes on a paralysed face.

"Then I must wait?" asked the young man.

"Yes."

"But the contract?"

The same smile returned.

"Will you assure me it shall not be signed?"

"Yes," said Noirtier.

"So the contract will not be even signed!" cried Morrel. "Oh, pardon, monsieur! on the announcement of a great happiness one has a right to be incredulous,—the contract will not be signed?"

"No," said the paralytic.

Notwithstanding that assurance, Morrel still hesitated. This promise of an impotent old man was so strange that instead of being the result of the power of his will, it might arise from feebleness of mind. Is it not natural that the madman, ignorant of his folly, should promise to accomplish things beyond his control? The weak man talks of burdens he can raise, the timid of giants he can confront, the poor of treasures he spends, the most humble peasant, in the height of his pride, calls himself Jupiter. Whether Noirtier understood the young man's indecision, or whether he had not full confidence in his docility he looked steadily at him.

"What do you wish, monsieur," asked Morrel,—"that I should renew my promise of remaining tranquil?"

Noirtier's eye remained fixed and firm, as if to imply that a promise did not suffice; then it passed from his face to his hands.

"Shall I swear to you, monsieur?" then asked Maximilian.

"Yes," said the paralytic, with the same solemnity.

Morrel understood that the old man attached great importance to that oath. He raised his hand. "I swear to you, on my honour," said he, "to await your decision respecting the course I am to pursue with M. d'Epinay."

"Good!" said the old man's eyes.

"Now," said Morrel, "do you wish me to retire?"

"Yes."

"Without seeing Mademoiselle Valentine?"

"Yes."

Morrel made a sign that he was ready to obey. "But," said he, "first, monsieur, allow your son to embrace you as your daughter did just now."

Noirtier's expression could not be misunderstood. The young man pressed his lips on the same spot on the old man's forehead where Valentine's had been. Then he bowed a second time, and retired. He found the old servant outside the door, to whom Valentine had given directions; he conducted Morrel along a dark passage, which led to a little door opening on the garden. Morrel soon found the spot where he had entered; with the assistance of the shrubs he gained the top of the wall, and by his ladder was in an instant in the clover-field, where his cabriolet was still waiting for him. He got into it; and thoroughly wearied by so many emotions, but with a heart less burdened with anxiety, he arrived about midnight in the Rue Meslay, threw himself on his bed, and slept as if he had been deeply intoxicated.

CHAPTER LXXIV

THE VILLEFORT FAMILY VAULT

Two days after, a considerable crowd was assembled, towards ten o'clock in the morning, round the door of M. de Villefort's house; and a long file of mourning-coaches and private carriages extended along the Faubourg St. Honoré and the Rue de la Pépinière. Among them was one of a very singular form, which appeared to have come from a distance. It was a kind of

covered waggon, painted black, and was one of the first at the funereal gathering. Inquiry was made; and it was ascertained that by a strange coincidence, this carriage contained the body of the Marquis de Saint-Méran, and that those who had come thinking to attend one funeral would follow two corpses. Their number was great. The Marquis de Saint-Méran—one of the most zealous and faithful dignitaries of Louis XVIII. and King Charles X.—had retained a great number of friends; and these, added to the personages on whom the usages of society gave Villefort a claim, formed a considerable body.

Due information was given to the authorities, and permission obtained that the two funerals should take place at the same time. A second hearse, decked with the same funereal pomp, was brought to M. de Villefort's door, and the coffin removed into it from the post-waggon. The two bodies were to be interred in the cemetery of Père la Chaise, where M. de Villefort had long since had a tomb prepared for the reception of his family. The remains of poor Renée were already deposited there, whom, after ten years of separation, her father and mother were now going to rejoin. The Parisians, always curious, always affected by funereal display, looked on with religious silence, while the splendid procession accompanied to their last abode two of the number of the old aristocracy,—the most celebrated for their traditional habits of mind, their reliability, and their obstinate devotion to principles. In one of the mourning-coaches, Beauchamp, Albert, and Château-Renaud were talking of the very sudden death of the marchioness. "I saw Madame de Saint-Méran only last year at Marseilles," said Château-Renaud, "and should have supposed she might have lived to be a hundred years old, from her apparent sound health and great activity of mind and body. How old was she?"

"Franz assured me," replied Albert, "that she was seventy years old. She has not died of old age, but of grief; it appears that since the death of the marquis, which affected her very deeply, she has not completely recovered her reason."

"But of what disease did she then die?" asked Beauchamp.

"It is said to have been a congestion of the brain, or apoplexy, which is the same thing, is it not?"

"Nearly."

"It is difficult to believe it was apoplexy," said Beauchamp. "Madame de Saint-Méran, whom I have seen once or twice, was short, of slender form, and of a much more nervous than sanguine temperament; grief could hardly produce apoplexy in such a constitution as that of Madame de Saint-Méran."

"At any rate," said Albert, "whatever disease or doctor may have killed her, M. de Villefort, or rather, Mademoiselle Valentine, —or rather again, our friend Franz, inherits a magnificent fortune, amounting, I believe, to eighty thousand livres per annum."

"And this fortune will be doubled at the death of the old Jacobin, Noirtier."

"That is a tenacious old grandfather," said Beauchamp,— "*tenacem propositi virum.* I think he must have made an agreement with Death to outlive all his heirs; and he appears likely to succeed. He resembles the old Conventionalist of '93, who said to Napoleon in 1814, 'You bend because your empire is a young stem, weakened by rapid growth. Take the republic for a tutor; let us return with renewed strength to the battle-field, and I promise you five hundred thousand soldiers, another Marengo, and a second Austerlitz. Ideas do not become extinct, sire; they slumber sometimes, but only revive the stronger before they sleep entirely.'"

"It appears," said Albert, "that to him ideas and men are alike. One thing only puzzles me,—how Franz d'Epinay will like a grandfather who cannot be separated from his wife. But where is Franz?"

"In the first carriage, with M. de Villefort, who considers him already as one of the family."

Such was the conversation in almost all the carriages. These two sudden deaths, so quickly following each other, astonished every one; but no one suspected the terrible secret which M. d'Avrigny had communicated in his nocturnal walk to M. de Villefort. They arrived in about an hour at the cemetery; the weather was mild but dull, and in harmony with the funeral ceremony. Among the groups which flocked towards the family vault, Château-Renaud recognised Morrel, who had come alone in a cabriolet, and walked, pale and silent, along the path bordered with yew-trees. "You here!" said Château-Renaud passing his arm through the young captain's; "are you a friend of Villefort? How is it that I have never met you at his house?"

"I am no acquaintance of M. de Villefort's," answered Morrel, "but I was of Madame de Saint-Méran."

Albert came up to them at this moment with Franz. "The time and place are but ill-suited for an introduction," said Albert; "but we are not superstitious. M. Morrel, allow me to present to you M. Franz d'Epinay,—a delightful travelling companion, with whom I made the tour of Italy. My dear

Franz, M. Maximilian Morrel,—an excellent friend I have acquired in your absence, and whose name you will hear me mention every time I make any allusion to affection, wit, or amiability."

Morrel hesitated for a moment. He feared it would be hypocritical to accost in a friendly manner the man whom he was tacitly opposing; but his oath and the gravity of the circumstances recurred to his memory. He struggled to conceal his emotion, and bowed to Franz.

"Mademoiselle de Villefort is in deep sorrow, is she not?" said Debray to Franz.

"Extremely," replied he; "she looked so pale this morning that I scarcely knew her."

These apparently simple words pierced Morrel to the heart. This man had then seen Valentine, and spoken to her! The young and high-spirited officer required all his strength of mind to resist breaking his oath. He took the arm of Château-Renaud, and turned towards the vault, where the attendants had already placed the two coffins.

"This is a magnificent habitation," said Beauchamp, looking towards the mausoleum; "a summer and winter palace. You will, in turn, enter it, my dear D'Epinay, for you will soon be numbered as one of the family. I, as a philosopher, should like a little country-house,—a cottage down there under the trees, without so many hewn-stones over my poor body. In dying, I will say to those around me what Voltaire wrote to Piron, '*Eo rus*, and all will be over.' But come, Franz, take courage; your wife inherits."

"Indeed, Beauchamp," said Franz, "you are unbearable. Politics have made you laugh at everything, and men of business generally believe in nothing. But, when you have the honour of associating with ordinary men, and the pleasure of leaving politics for a moment, try to find your affectionate heart, which you leave with your stick when you go to the Chamber of Deputies, or to the Chamber of Peers."

"Eh! my God!" said Beauchamp, "what is life? A pause in Death's ante-room."

"I am prejudiced against Beauchamp," said Albert, drawing Franz away, and leaving the former to finish his philosophical dissertation with Debray.

The Villefort vault formed a square of white stones, about twenty feet high; an interior partition separated the two families, Saint-Méran and Villefort, and each compartment had its entrance-door. Here were not, as in other tombs, those

ignoble drawers, one above another, where economy encloses its dead with an inscription resembling a ticket; all that was visible within the bronze gates was a gloomy-looking room separated by a wall from the vault itself. The two doors beforementioned were in the middle of this wall and opened into the Villefort and Saint-Méran tombs. There grief might freely expend itself without being disturbed by the trifling loungers who might come as a picnic party to visit Père la Chaise, or by lovers who made it their rendezvous.

The two coffins were placed on trestles previously prepared for their reception, and were borne into the right-hand division, belonging to the Saint-Méran family. Villefort, Franz, and a few near relatives alone entered the sanctuary.

As the religious ceremonies had all been performed at the door, and there was no address given, the party separated immediately; Château-Renaud, Albert, and Morrel went one way, and Debray and Beauchamp another. Franz remained with M. de Villefort at the gate of the cemetery. Morrel made an excuse to wait; he saw Franz and M. de Villefort get into the same mourning-coach, and thought this *tête-à-tête* foreboded evil. He then returned to Paris; and although in the same carriage with Château-Renaud and Albert, he did not hear one word of their conversation.

As Franz was about to take leave of M. de Villefort, "When shall I see you again?" said the latter.

"At what time you please, monsieur," replied Franz.

"As soon as possible."

"I am at your command, monsieur; shall we return together?"

"If that will not disarrange your plans."

"Not at all."

Thus the future father-in-law and son-in-law stepped into the same carriage, and Morrel, seeing them pass, became, with reason, very anxious. Villefort and Franz returned to the Faubourg St. Honoré. The *procureur*, without going to see either his wife or his daughter, passed rapidly to his cabinet, and offering the young man a chair, "M. d'Epinay," said he, "allow me to remind you at this moment, which is perhaps not so ill-chosen as at first sight may appear,—for obedience to the wishes of the departed is the first offering which should be made at their tomb,—allow me, then, to remind you of the wish expressed by Madame de Saint-Méran on her death-bed, that Valentine's wedding might not be deferred. You know the affairs of the deceased are in perfect order, and that her will

bequeaths to Valentine the entire property of the Saint-Méran family; the notary showed me the documents yesterday which will enable us to draw up the marriage-contract with precise details. The notary is M. Deschamps, Place Beauvau, Faubourg St. Honoré."

"Monsieur," replied M. d'Epinay, "it is not perhaps the moment for Mademoiselle Valentine, who is in deep distress, to think of a husband; indeed, I fear—"

"Valentine," interrupted M. de Villefort, "will have no greater pleasure than that of fulfilling her grandmother's last injunctions; there will be no obstacle from that quarter, I assure you."

"In that case," replied Franz, "as I shall raise none, you may make arrangements when you please; I have pledged my word, and shall feel pleasure and happiness in adhering to it."

"Then," said Villefort, "nothing further is required; the contract was to have been signed three days since. We shall find it all ready, and can sign it to-day."

"But the mourning?" said Franz, hesitating.

"Fear not," replied Villefort; "no demands of propriety will be neglected in my house. Mademoiselle de Villefort may retire during the prescribed three months to her estate of Saint-Méran,—I say 'her estate,' for that property belongs to her. There, in a week, if you like, the civil marriage shall be celebrated without pomp or ceremony. Madame de Saint-Méran wished her granddaughter to be married there. When that is over, you, monsieur, can return to Paris, while your wife passes the time of her mourning with her stepmother."

"As you please, monsieur," said Franz.

"Then," replied M. de Villefort, "have the kindness to wait half an hour; Valentine shall come down into the drawing-room. I will send for M. Deschamps; we will read and sign the contract before we separate, and this evening Madame de Villefort shall accompany Valentine to her estate, where we will rejoin them in a week."

"Monsieur," said Franz, "I have one request to make."

"What is it?"

"I wish Albert de Morcerf and Raoul de Château-Renaud to be present at this signing; you know they are my witnesses."

"Half an hour will suffice to apprise them; will you go for them yourself, or will you send?"

"I prefer going, monsieur."

"I shall expect you, then, in half an hour, baron; and Valentine will be ready."

Franz bowed and left the room. Scarcely had the door closed when M. de Villefort sent to tell Valentine to be ready in the drawing-room in half an hour, as he expected the notary and M. d'Epinay and his witnesses. The news caused a great sensation throughout the house; Madame de Villefort would not believe it, and Valentine was thunderstruck. She looked round for help and would have gone down to her grandfather's room; but she met M. de Villefort on the stairs, who took her arm and led her into the drawing-room. In the ante-room Valentine met Barrois, and looked despairingly at the old servant. One moment after, Madame de Villefort entered the drawing-room with her little Edouard. It was evident that she had shared the grief of the family, for she was pale and looked fatigued. She sat down, took Edouard on her knees, and from time to time pressed almost convulsively to her bosom this child, on whom she seemed to concentrate her whole life. Two carriages were soon heard to enter the courtyard. One was the notary's; the other, that of Franz and his friends. In a moment the whole party was assembled. Valentine was so pale that one might trace the blue veins from her temples round her eyes and down her cheeks. Franz was deeply affected. Château-Renaud and Albert looked at each other with amazement; the ceremony which was just concluded had not appeared more sorrowful than did that which was about to begin. Madame de Villefort had placed herself in the shade behind a velvet curtain; and as she constantly bent over her child, it was difficult to read the expression of her face. M. de Villefort was, as usual, unmoved.

The notary, after having, according to the customary method, arranged the papers on the table, taken his place in an armchair, and raised his spectacles, turned towards Franz. "Are you M. Franz de Quesnel, Baron d'Epinay?" asked he, although he knew it perfectly.

"Yes, monsieur," replied Franz.

The notary bowed. "I have, then, to inform you, monsieur," at the request of M. de Villefort, that your projected marriage with Mademoiselle de Villefort has changed the feeling of M. Noirtier towards his grandchild, and that he disinherits her entirely of the fortune he would have left her. Let me hasten to add," continued he, "that the testator, having only the right to alienate a part of his fortune, and having alienated it all, the will will not sustain an attack, and will be declared null and void."

"Yes," said Villefort; "but I warn M. d'Epinay that during

my lifetime my father's will shall never be attacked, since my position forbids incurring a breath of scandal."

"Monsieur," said Franz, "I regret much that such a question has been raised in the presence of Mademoiselle Valentine; I have never inquired into the amount of her fortune, which, however limited it may be, exceeds mine. My family has sought consideration in this alliance with M. de Villefort; all I seek is happiness."

Valentine imperceptibly thanked him, while two silent tears rolled down her cheeks.

"Besides, monsieur," said Villefort, addressing himself to his future son-in-law, "aside from this loss of a part of your expectations, this surprising will contains nothing which should wound you personally; M. Noirtier's weakness of mind sufficiently explains it. It is not because Mademoiselle Valentine is going to marry you that he is angry, but because she will marry; a union with any other would have caused him the same sorrow. Old age is selfish, monsieur; and Mademoiselle de Villefort has been a faithful companion to M. Noirtier, which she cannot be when Madame la Baronne d'Epinay. My father's melancholy state prevents our speaking to him on many subjects which the weakness of his mind would incapacitate him from understanding; and I am very sure that at the present time, although he knows his granddaughter is going to be married, M. Noirtier has even forgotten the name of his intended grandson."

M. de Villefort had scarcely said these words, to which Franz responded with a bow, when the door opened, and Barrois appeared. "Gentlemen," said he, in a tone strangely firm for a servant speaking to his masters under such solemn circumstances,—"gentlemen, M. Noirtier de Villefort wishes to speak immediately to M. Franz de Quesnel, Baron d'Epinay." He, like the notary, that there might be no mistake in the person, gave all his titles to the bridegroom elect.

Villefort started; Madame de Villefort let her son slip from her knees; Valentine rose, pale and dumb as a statue. Albert and Château-Renaud exchanged a second look, more full of amazement than the first. The notary looked at Villefort.

"It is impossible," said the *procureur du roi*. "M. le Baron d'Epinay cannot leave the drawing-room at this moment."

"It is at this moment," replied Barrois, with the same firmness, "that M. Noirtier, my master, wishes to speak on important subjects to M. Franz d'Epinay."

"Grandpapa Noirtier can speak now, then," said Edouard,

with his habitual impertinence. However, his remark did not make Madame de Villefort even smile, so much was every mind engaged, and so solemn was the situation.

"Say to M. Noirtier," said Villefort, "that it is impossible to comply with his request."

"Then M. Noirtier announces to these gentlemen," said Barrois, "that he will have himself brought into the drawing-room."

Astonishment was at its height. A kind of smile was perceptible on Madame de Villefort's countenance. Valentine instinctively raised her eyes as if to thank Heaven.

"Pray go, Valentine," said M. de Villefort, "and see what this new fancy of your grandfather's is." Valentine rose quickly, and was hastening towards the door, when M. de Villefort altered his intention.

"Stop!" said he, "I will go with you."

"Excuse me, monsieur," said Franz; "it seems to me that since M. Noirtier has sent for me it is I who should respond to his wishes. Besides, I shall be happy to pay my respects to him, not having yet had the honour of doing so."

"Pray, monsieur," said Villefort, with marked uneasiness, "do not disturb yourself."

"Forgive me, monsieur," said Franz, in a resolute tone. "I would not lose this opportunity of proving to M. Noirtier how wrong it would be in him to entertain feelings of dislike to me, which I am determined to conquer, whatever they may be, by my devotedness." And without listening to Villefort he rose and followed Valentine, who was running down stairs with the joy of a shipwrecked mariner who finds a rock to cling to. M. de Villefort followed them. Château-Renaud and Morcerf exchanged a third look of still increasing wonder.

CHAPTER LXXV

THE DEPOSITION

Noirtier was prepared to receive them, dressed in black, and installed in his arm-chair. When the three persons he expected had entered, he looked at the door, which his valet immediately closed.

"Listen," whispered Villefort to Valentine, who could not conceal her joy; "if M. Noirtier wishes to communicate anything which would delay your marriage, I forbid you to understand him."

Valentine blushed, but did not answer. Villefort approached Noirtier. "Here is M. Franz d'Epinay," said he; "you requested to see him. We have all wished for this interview, and I trust it will convince you how unfounded are your objections to Valentine's marriage."

Noirtier answered only by a look which made Villefort's blood run cold. He made with his eyes a sign to Valentine to approach. In a moment, thanks to her habit of conversing with her grandfather, she understood that he asked for a key. Then his eye was fixed on the drawer of a small chest between the windows. She opened the drawer and found a key; and understanding that was what he wanted, again watched his eyes, which turned towards an old secretary long since forgotten, and supposed to contain none but useless documents.

"Shall I open the secretary?" asked Valentine.

"Yes," said the old man.

"And the drawers?"

"Yes."

"Those at the side?"

"No."

"The middle one?"

"Yes."

Valentine opened it and drew out a bundle of papers. "Is that what you wished for?" asked she.

"No."

She took out successively all the other papers till the drawer was empty. "But there are no more," said she.

Noirtier's eye was fixed on the dictionary.

"Yes, I understand, grandfather," said the young girl.

She pointed to each letter of the alphabet. At the letter S the old man stopped her. She opened the dictionary and searched down to the word "secret."

"Ah! is there a secret?" said Valentine.

"Yes," intimated Noirtier.

"And who knows it?"

Noirtier looked at the door where the servant had gone out.

"Barrois?" said she.

"Yes."

"Shall I call him?"

"Yes."

Valentine went to the door and called Barrois. Villefort's impatience during this scene made the perspiration roll from his forehead; and Franz was stupefied. The old servant came.

"Barrois," said Valentine, "my grandfather has told me to

open that drawer in the secretary, but there is a secret about it which you know; will you open it?"

Barrois looked at the old man.

"Obey," said Noirtier's intelligent eye.

Barrois touched a spring; the false bottom came out, and they saw a bundle of papers tied with a black string.

"Is that what you wish for, monsieur?" inquired Barrois.

"Yes."

"Shall I give these papers to M. de Villefort?"

"No."

"To Mademoiselle Valentine?"

"No."

"To M. Franz d'Epinay?"

"Yes."

Franz, astonished, advanced a step. "To me, monsieur?" said he.

"Yes."

Franz took them from Barrois, and casting his eye on the cover, read:—

"To be given, after my death, to General Durand, who shall bequeath the packet to his son, with an injunction to preserve it as containing a document of the greatest importance."

"Well, monsieur," asked Franz, "what do you wish me to do with this paper?"

"To preserve it, sealed up as it is, doubtless," said the *procureur du roi*.

"No!" replied Noirtier, eagerly.

"Do you wish him to read it?" said Valentine.

"Yes," replied the old man.

"You understand, Monsieur the Baron, my grandfather wishes you to read this paper," said Valentine.

"Then let us sit down," said Villefort, impatiently, "for it will take some time."

"Sit down," said the eye of the old man.

Villefort took a chair; but Valentine remained standing by her grandfather's side, and Franz stood before him. He took the mysterious paper in his hand. "Read," said the eyes of the old man. Franz broke the envelope, and in the midst of the most profound silence, read:—

'*Extract from the Procés-verbaux of a meeting of the Bonapartist Club in the Rue St. Jacques, held Feb.* 5, 1815."

Franz stopped. "Feb. 5, 1815!" said he; "it is the day my father was murdered."

Valentine and Villefort were dumb; the eye of the old man alone seemed to say clearly, "Go on."

"But it was on leaving this club," said he, "that my father disappeared."

Noirtier's eye continued to say, "Read."

He resumed:—

"The undersigned—Louis Jacques Beaurepaire, lieutenant-colonel of artillery, Etienne Duchampy, brigadier-general, and Claude Lecharpal, keeper of streams and forests—declare that on the 4th of February a letter arrived from the Isle of Elba, recommending to the kindness and the confidence of the Bonapartist Club General Flavien de Quesnel, who, having served the emperor from 1804 to 1814, was supposed to be devoted to the interests of the Napoleon dynasty, notwithstanding the title of baron, which Louis XVIII. had just granted to him with his estate of Epinay.

"A note was in consequence addressed to General de Quesnel, begging him to be present at the meeting next day, the 5th. The note indicated neither the street nor the number of the house where the meeting was to be held; it bore no signature, but it announced to the general that some one would call for him, if he would be ready at nine o'clock. The meetings were always held from that time till midnight. At nine o'clock the president of the club presented himself; the general was ready. The president informed him that one of the conditions of his introduction was that he should be for ever ignorant of the place of meeting, and that he would allow his eyes to be bandaged, swearing that he would not endeavour to take off the bandage. General de Quesnel accepted the condition, and promised, on his honour, not to seek to discover the road they should take. The general's carriage was ready; but the president told him it was impossible to use it, since it would be superfluous to blind the eyes of the master, if the coachman was to go with eyes wide open to recognise the streets through which he passed. 'What must, then, be done?' asked the general. 'I have my carriage here,' said the president. 'Have you, then, so much confidence in your servant that you can intrust him with a secret you will not allow me to know?' 'Our coachman is a member of the club,' said the president; 'we shall be driven by a state-councillor.' 'Then we run another risk,' said the general, laughing, 'that of being turned out.' We insert this joke to prove that the general was not in the least compelled to attend this meeting, but that he came willingly. When they were seated in the carriage, the president reminded the general of his promise to allow his eyes to be bandaged, to which he made no opposition. On the road the president thought he saw the general make an attempt to remove the handkerchief, and reminded him of his oath. 'True,' said the general. The carriage stopped at a passage leading to the Rue St. Jacques. The general alighted, leaning on the arm of the president, of whose dignity he was not aware, considering him simply as a member of the club; they crossed the passage, mounted to the first story, and entered the meeting-room.

"The deliberations had already commenced. The members, apprised of the sort of presentation which was to be made that

evening, were all in attendance. When in the middle of the room the general was invited to remove his bandage. He did so immediately, and appeared much surprised to see so many well-known faces in a society of whose existence he had till then been ignorant. They questioned him as to his sentiments; but he contented himself with answering that the letters from the Isle of Elba ought to have informed them—"

Franz interrupted himself by saying, "My father was a Royalist; they need not have asked his sentiments, which were well known."

"And hence," said Villefort, "arose my affection for your father, my dear M. Franz. A similarity of opinion soon binds."

"Read," the eye of the old man continued to say.

Franz continued:—

"The president then sought to make him speak more explicitly; but M. de Quesnel replied that he wished first to know what they wanted with him. He was then informed of the contents of the letter from the Isle of Elba, in which he was recommended to the club as a man who would be likely to advance the interests of their party. One paragraph alluded to the return of Bonaparte, and promised another letter, and further details, on the arrival of the *Pharaon*, belonging to the shipbuilder Morrel, of Marseilles, whose captain was entirely devoted to the emperor. During all this time, the general, on whom they thought to have relied as on a brother, manifested evident signs of discontent and repugnance. When the reading was finished he remained silent, with knit brow. 'Well,' asked the president, 'what do you say to this letter, general?' 'I say that it is too soon after declaring myself for Louis XVIII. to break my vow in behalf of the ex-emperor.'

"This answer was too clear to leave any doubt as to his sentiments. 'General,' said the president, 'we acknowledge no King Louis XVIII., nor an ex-emperor, but his Majesty the Emperor and King, driven from France, which is his kingdom, by violence and treason.' 'Excuse me, gentlemen,' said the general, 'you may not acknowledge Louis XVIII., but I do, as he has made me a baron and a field-marshal, and I shall never forget that for these two titles I am indebted to his happy return to France.'

"'Monsieur,' said the president, in a most serious tone, and rising as he spoke, 'be careful what you say; your words clearly show us that they are deceived concerning you in the Isle of Elba, and that we have been deceived! The communication which has been made to you testifies to the confidence placed in you, and consequently to a sentiment which does you honour. Now we discover our error; a title and promotion attach you to the government we wish to overturn. We will not constrain you to help us,—we enroll no one against his conscience; but we will compel you to act honourably even if you are not disposed to do so.' 'You would call it acting honourably to know your conspiracy, and not to reveal it; that is what I should call becoming your accomplice. You see I am more candid than you.'"

"Ah, my father!" said Franz, interrupting himself. "I understand now why they murdered him."

Valentine could not help casting one glance towards the young man, whose filial enthusiasm it was delightful to behold. Villefort walked to and fro behind him. Noirtier watched the expression of each one, and preserved his dignified and commanding attitude. Franz returned to the manuscript, and continued:—

"'Monsieur,' said the president, 'you have been invited to join this assembly; you were not forced here. It was proposed to you to come blindfolded; you accepted. When you complied with this twofold request you well knew we did not wish to secure the throne of Louis XVIII., or we should not take so much care to avoid the vigilance of the police. It would be conceding too much to allow you to put on a mask to aid you in the discovery of our secret, and then to remove it that you may ruin those who have confided in you. No, no; you must first say if you declare yourself for the king of a day who now reigns, or for his Majesty the Emperor.' 'I am a Royalist,' replied the general; 'I have taken the oath of allegiance to Louis XVIII., and I will adhere to it.' These words were followed by a general murmur; and it was evident that several of the members were discussing the propriety of making the general repent of his rashness. The president again rose, and having imposed silence, said, 'Monsieur, you are too serious and too sensible a man not to understand the consequences of our present situation, and your candour has already dictated to us the conditions which remain for us to offer you. You will swear, then, upon honour, not to disclose anything that you have heard.' The general, putting his hand on his sword, exclaimed, 'If you talk of honour, do not begin by disavowing its laws, and impose nothing by violence.' 'And you, monsieur,' continued the president, with a calmness still more terrible than the general's anger, 'do not touch your sword, I advise you.' The general looked around him with slight uneasiness; however, he did not yield, but recalling all his strength, 'I will not swear,' said he. 'Then you must die,' replied the president calmly. M. d'Epinay became very pale. He looked round him a second time; several members of the club were whispering, and getting their arms from under their cloaks. 'General,' said the president, 'do not alarm yourself. You are among men of honour, who will use every means to convince you before resorting to the last extremity; but as you have said, you are among conspirators, you are in possession of our secret, and you must restore it to us.' A significant silence followed these words, and as the general did not reply, 'Close the doors,' said the president to the door-keepers. The same deadly silence succeeded these words. Then the general advanced, and making a violent effort to control his feelings, 'I have a son,' said he, 'and I must think of him, on finding myself among assassins.' 'General,' said the chief of the assembly, with a noble air, 'one man may insult fifty; it is the privilege of weakness. But he does wrong to use his privilege. Follow my advice, swear, and do not insult.'

The general, again daunted by the superiority of the chief,

hesitated a moment; then advancing to the president's desk, 'What is the form?' said he. 'It is this: "I swear by my honour not to reveal to any one what I have seen and heard on the 5th of February, 1815, between nine and ten o'clock in the evening; and I admit myself deserving of death should I ever violate this oath."' The general appeared to be affected by a nervous shudder, which prevented his answering for some moments; then overcoming his manifest repugnance, he pronounced the required oath, but in so low a tone as to be scarcely audible to the majority of the members, who insisted on his repeating it clearly and distinctly, which he did. 'Now am I at liberty to retire?' said he. The president rose, appointed three members to accompany him, and got into the carriage with the general after bandaging his eyes. One of those three members was the coachman who had driven them there. The other members of the club silently dispersed. 'Where do you wish to be taken?' asked the president. 'Anywhere out of your presence,' replied M. d'Epinay. 'Beware, monsieur,' replied the president; 'you are no longer in the assembly, and have only to do with individuals; do not insult them unless you wish to be held responsible.' But instead of listening, M. d'Epinay went on, 'You are still as brave in your carriage as in your assembly, because you are still four against one.' The president stopped the coach. They were at that part of the Quai des Ormes where the steps lead down to the river. 'Why do you stop here?' asked D'Epinay. 'Because, monsieur,' said the president, 'you have insulted a man, and that man will not go one step farther without demanding honourable reparation.' 'Another method of assassination?' said the general, shrugging his shoulders. 'Make no noise, monsieur, unless you wish me to consider you as one of those men whom you designated just now as cowards, who take their weakness for a shield. You are alone; one alone shall answer you. You have a sword by your side; I have one in my cane. You have no witness; one of these gentlemen will serve you. Now, if you please, remove your bandage.' The general tore the handkerchief from his eyes. 'At last,' said he, 'I shall know with whom I have to do.' They opened the door; the four men alighted."

Franz again interrupted himself, and wiped the cold drops from his brow; there was something awful in hearing the son, trembling and pale, read aloud these details of his father's death, which had hitherto remained unknown. Valentine clasped her hands as if in prayer. Noirtier looked at Villefort with an almost sublime expression of contempt and pride. Franz continued:—

"It was, as we said, the 5th of February. For three days there had been five or six degrees of frost; the steps were covered with ice. The general was stout and tall; the president offered him the side of the railing to assist him in getting down. The two witnesses followed. It was a dark night. The ground from the steps to the river was covered with snow and hoar-frost; the water of the river looked black and deep. One of the seconds went for a lantern in a coal-barge near, and by its light they examined the arms. The

president's sword, which was simply, as he had said, one he carried in his cane, was five inches shorter than the general's and had no guard. The general proposed to cast lots for the swords, but the president said it was he who had given the provocation, and when he had given it he had supposed each would use his own arms. The witnesses endeavoured to insist, but the president bade them be silent. The lantern was placed on the ground; the two adversaries put themselves in position; and the duel commenced. The light made the two swords appear like flashes of lightning; as for the men, they were scarcely perceptible, the darkness was so great. M. le Général d'Epinay passed for one of the best swordsmen in the army; but he was pressed so closely in the onset that he missed his aim and fell. The witnesses thought he was dead, but his adversary, who knew he had not struck him, offered him the assistance of his hand to rise. The circumstance irritated instead of calming the general, and he rushed on his adversary. But his opponent did not miss one stroke. Receiving him on his sword, three times the general drew back, and finding himself too closely pressed, returned to the charge. At the third he fell again. They thought he had slipped, as at first, and the witnesses, seeing that he did not move, approached and endeavoured to raise him, but the one who passed his arm around the body felt under his hand a moist warmth,—it was blood. The general, who had almost fainted, revived. 'Ah!' said he, 'they have sent some fencing-master to fight with me.' The president, without answering, approached the witness, who held the lantern, and raising his sleeve, showed him two wounds he had received in his arm; then opening his coat, and unbuttoning his waistcoat, displayed his side, pierced with a third wound. Still he had not even uttered a sigh. The General d'Epinay died five minutes after."

Franz read these last words in a voice so choked that they were hardly audible, and then stopped, passing his hand over his eyes as if to dispel a cloud; but after a moment's silence, he continued:—

"The president went up the steps, after pushing his sword into his cane; a track of blood on the snow marked his course. He had scarcely arrived at the top when he heard a heavy splash in the water; it was the general's body, which the witnesses had just thrown into the river after ascertaining he was dead. The general fell, then, in a loyal duel, and not in ambush, as it might have been reported. In proof of this we have signed this paper to establish the truth of the facts, lest the moment should arrive when either of the actors in this terrible scene should be accused of premeditated murder or of infringement of the laws of honour.

"BEAUREPAIRE,
"DUCHAMPY,
"LECHARPAL."

When Franz had finished reading this account, so dreadful for a son; when Valentine, pale with emotion, had wiped away

a tear; when Villefort, trembling and crouched in a corner, had endeavoured to lessen the storm by supplicating glances at the implacable old man,—"Monsieur," said D'Epinay to Noirtier, "since you are well acquainted with all these details, which are attested by honourable signatures; since you appear to take some interest in me, although you have manifested it hitherto only by causing me sorrow,—refuse me not one final satisfaction; tell me the name of the president of the club, that I may at least know who killed my poor father."

Villefort mechanically felt for the handle of the door; Valentine, who had anticipated sooner than any one her grandfather's answer, and who had often seen two scars upon his right arm, drew back a few steps.

"Mademoiselle,' said Franz, turning towards Valentine, "unite your efforts with mine to find out the name of the man who made me an orphan at two years of age."

Valentine remained dumb and motionless.

"Hold, monsieur!" said Villefort, "do not prolong this dreadful scene. The names have been purposely concealed. My father himself does not know who this president was, and if he knows he cannot tell you; proper names are not in the dictionary."

"Oh, misery!" cried Franz; "the only hope which sustained me and enabled me to read to the end was that of knowing at least the name of him who killed my father! Monsieur! monsieur!" cried he, turning to Noirtier, "in Heaven's name, do what you can! Make me understand in some way!"

"Yes," replied Noirtier.

"Oh, mademoiselle! mademoiselle!" cried Franz, "your grandfather says he can indicate—that man. Help me! lend me your assistance!"

Noirtier looked at the dictionary. Franz took it with a nervous trembling and repeated the letters of the alphabet successively until he came to M. At that letter the old man signified "Yes."

"M," repeated Franz. The young man's finger glided over the words, but at each one Noirtier answered by a negative sign. Valentine hid her head between her hands. At length Franz arrived at the word *moi* (myself).

"Yes," indicated the old man.

"You?" cried Franz, whose hair stood on end; "you, M. Noirtier?—you killed my father?"

"Yes," replied Noirtier, fixing a majestic look on the young man.

Franz fell powerless on a chair; Villefort opened the door and escaped, for the idea had entered his mind to stifle the little remaining life in the old man's heart.

CHAPTER LXXVI

PROGRESS OF M. CAVALCANTI THE YOUNGER

MEANWHILE M. Cavalcanti the elder had returned to his service, not in the army of his Majesty the Emperor of Austria, but at the gaming-table of the baths of Lucca, of which he was one of the most assiduous attendants. He had spent every farthing that had been allowed for his journey, and as a reward for the majestic and solemn manner in which he had maintained his assumed character of father. M. Andrea at his departure had inherited all the papers which proved that he had indeed the honour of being the son of the Marquis Bartolomeo and the Marquise Oliva Corsinari. He was now fairly launched in that Parisian society which gives such ready access to foreigners, and treats them, not as what they really are, but as what they wish to be considered. Besides, what is required of a young man in Paris? To speak its language tolerably, to make a good appearance, to be a good gamester, and pay in cash. They are certainly less particular with a foreigner than with a Frenchman. Andrea had then, in a fortnight, attained a very fair position. He was entitled Monsieur the Count; he was said to possess fifty thousand livres per annum; and his father's immense riches, buried in the quarries of Saravezza, were a constant theme of conversation. A learned man, before whom the last circumstance was mentioned as a fact, declared that he had seen the quarries in question, which gave great weight to assertions hitherto somewhat doubtful, but which now assumed the garb of reality.

Such was the condition of affairs in the circle of Parisian society to which we have introduced our readers, when Monte Cristo went one evening to pay M. Danglars a visit. M. Danglars was out; but the count was asked to go and see the baroness, and he accepted the invitation. It was never without a nervous shudder, since the dinner at Auteuil and the events which followed it, that Madame Danglars heard Monte Cristo's name announced. If he did not come, the painful sensation became most intense; if on the contrary he appeared, his noble countenance, his brilliant eyes, his amiability, his polite attention even towards Madame Danglars, soon dispelled every impression

of fear. It appeared impossible to the baroness that a man of such delightfully pleasing manners should entertain evil designs against her. Besides, the most corrupt minds only suspect evil when it would answer some interested end; useless injury is repugnant to every mind. When Monte Cristo entered the boudoir to which we have already once introduced our readers, and where the baroness was examining some drawings which her daughter passed to her after having looked at them with M. Cavalcanti, his presence soon produced its usual effect; and it was with smiles that the baroness received the count, although she had been a little disconcerted at the announcement of his name. The latter embraced the whole scene at a glance.

The baroness was partially reclining on a *causeuse*, Eugénie sat near her, and Cavalcanti was standing. Cavalcanti, dressed in black, like one of Goethe's heroes, with japanned shoes and open white silk stockings, passed a white and tolerably nice-looking hand through his light hair, in the midst of which sparkled a diamond which, in spite of Monte Cristo's advice, the vain young man had been unable to resist putting on his little finger. This movement was accompanied by killing glances at Mademoiselle Danglars, and sighs addressed to the same party. Mademoiselle Danglars was still the same,—cold, beautiful, and satirical. Not one of these glances, nor one sigh, escaped her; they might have been said to fall on the shield of Minerva,—a shield which some philosophers assert protected sometimes the breast of Sappho. Eugénie bowed coldly to the count, and availed herself of the first moment when the conversation became earnest to escape to her study, whence very soon two cheerful and noisy voices, in connection with notes of the piano, assured Monte Cristo that Mademoiselle Danglars preferred to his society and to that of M. Cavalcanti the company of Mademoiselle Louise d'Armilly, her music-teacher.

It was then especially while conversing with Madame Danglars, and apparently absorbed by the charm of the conversation, that the count remarked M. Andrea Cavalcanti's solicitude, his manner of listening to the music at the door he dared not pass, and of manifesting his admiration. The banker soon returned. His first look was indeed directed towards Monte Cristo, but the second was for Andrea. As for his wife, he bowed to her in the manner of certain husbands towards their wives, but which bachelors will never comprehend until a very extensive code is published on conjugal life.

"Have not the ladies invited you to join them at the piano?" said Danglars to Andrea.

"Alas! no, monsieur," replied Andrea, with a sigh still more marked than the former ones. Danglars immediately advanced towards the door and opened it.

The two young ladies were seen seated on the same chair at the piano, accompanying themselves, each with one hand,—an exercise to which they had taken a fancy, and in which they had developed remarkable efficiency. Mademoiselle d'Armilly, whom they then perceived through the open doorway, formed with Eugénie one of those living pictures of which the Germans are so fond. She was somewhat beautiful, and exquisitely genteel,—a little fairy-like figure, with large curls falling on her neck (which was rather too long, as Perugino sometimes makes his Virgins), and eyes dull from fatigue. It was said that she had a weak chest, and like Antonia of the "Violin de Crémone," would die one day while singing. Monte Cristo cast a rapid and curious glance round this sanctum; it was the first time he had ever seen Mademoiselle d'Armilly, of whom he had heard much.

"Well!" said the banker to his daughter, "are we then all to be excluded?" He then led the young man into the study, and either by chance or manœuvre, the door was partially closed after Andrea, so that from the place where they sat neither the count nor the baroness could see anything; but as the banker had accompanied Andrea, Madame Danglars appeared to take no notice of it.

The count soon heard Andrea's voice, singing a Corsican song, accompanied by the piano. While the count smiled at hearing this song, which made him lose sight of Andrea in the recollection of Benedetto, Madame Danglars was boasting to Monte Cristo of her husband's strength of mind, who that very morning had lost three or four hundred thousand francs by a failure at Milan. The praise was well deserved, for had not the count heard it from the baroness, or by one of those means by which he knew everything, the baron's countenance would not have led him to suspect it. "Hem!" thought Monte Cristo, "he begins to conceal his losses; a month since he boasted of them." Then aloud, "Oh, madame, M. Danglars is so skilful, he will soon regain at the Bourse what he loses elsewhere."

"I see you are maintaining an erroneous idea, as well as many more," said Madame Danglars.

"What is it?" said Monte Cristo.

"That M. Danglars speculates, whereas he never does."

"Truly, madame, I recollect M. Debray told me—By the

way, what has become of him? I have seen nothing of him the last three or four days."

"Nor I," said Madame Danglars, with wonderful self-possession; "but you began a sentence and did not finish."

"What was it?"

"M. Debray had told you—"

"Ah, yes, he told me it was you who sacrificed to the demon of speculation."

"I was once very fond of it, I confess," said Madame Danglars; "but I am so no longer."

"Then you are wrong, madame. Fortune is precarious; and if I were a woman, and had fate made me a banker's wife, whatever might be my confidence in my husband's good fortune,—for in speculation, you know, it is all a matter of good fortune or bad fortune,—well, as I was saying, whatever confidence I might have in my husband's good fortune, I would secure for myself a fortune independent of him, even if I acquired it by placing my interest in hands unknown to him."

Madame Danglars blushed, in spite of all her efforts.

"Stay," said Monte Cristo, as though he had not observed her confusion; "I have heard of a lucky hit that was made yesterday in the Neapolitan bonds."

"I have none, nor have I ever possessed any; but really we have talked long enough of money, count. We are like two stock-brokers. Have you heard how fate is persecuting the poor Villeforts?"

"What has happened?" said the count, apparently ignorant of all.

"You know the Marquis de Saint-Méran died a few days after he had set out on his journey to Paris, and the marchioness a few days after her arrival?"

"Yes," said Monte Cristo, "I have heard that; but, as Claudius said to Hamlet, 'it is a law of nature; their fathers died before them, and they mourned their loss; they will die before their children, who will in their turn grieve for them.'"

"But that is not all."

"Not all!"

"No; they were going to marry their daughter—"

"To M. Franz d'Epinay. Is it broken off?"

"Yesterday morning, it appears, Franz declined the honour."

"Indeed! And is the reason known?"

"No."

"How extraordinary! And how does M. de Villefort bear all these misfortunes?"

"As usual,—like a philosopher."

Danglars returned at this moment alone.

"Well!" said the baroness, "do you leave M. Cavalcanti with your daughter?"

"And Mademoiselle d'Armilly," said the banker; "do you consider her no one?" Then, turning to Monte Cristo, he said, "Prince Cavalcanti is a charming young man, is he not? But is he really a prince?"

"I will not answer for it," said Monte Cristo. "His father was introduced to me as a marquis, so he ought to be a count; but I think he makes no great pretension to that title."

"Why?" said the banker. "If he is a prince, he is wrong not to maintain his rank. Every one should hold to his rights; it does not please me that any should deny his origin."

"Oh! you are a pure democrat," said Monte Cristo, smiling.

"But do you see," said the baroness, "to what you are exposing yourself? If, perchance, M. de Morcerf came, he would find M. Cavalcanti in that room, where he, the betrothed of Eugénie, has never been admitted."

"You may well say perchance," replied the banker; "for he comes so seldom it would seem only chance that brings him."

"But should he come, and find that young man with your daughter, he might be displeased."

"He! you are mistaken. M. Albert would not do us the honour to be jealous of his betrothed; he does not love her enough for that. Besides, I care not for his displeasure."

"Still, situated as we are—"

"Yes, do you know how we are situated? At his mother's ball he danced once with Eugénie, and M. Cavalcanti three times, and he took no notice of it."

The valet announced M. le Vicomte Albert de Morcerf. The baroness rose hastily, and was going into the study, when Danglars stopped her. "Stay!" said he. She looked at him in amazement. Monte Cristo appeared to be unconscious of what passed. Albert entered, looking very handsome and in high spirits. He bowed politely to the baroness, familiarly to Danglars, and affectionately to Monte Cristo. Then turning to the baroness, "May I ask how Mademoiselle Danglars is?" said he.

"She is quite well," replied Danglars, quickly; "at this moment she is practising music with M. Cavalcanti in her little salon."

Albert preserved his calm and indifferent manner; he might feel perhaps annoyed, but he knew Monte Cristo's eye was on

him. "M. avalcanti has a fine tenor voice," said he, "and Mademoisel Eugénie a splendid soprano; and then she plays on the piano like Thalberg. The concert must be a delighful one."

"They suit each other remarkably well," said Danglars.

Albert appeared not to notice this remark, which was, however, so rude that Madame Danglars blushed.

"I too," said the young man, "am a musician,—at least, my masters used to tell me so; but it is strange that my voice never would suit any other, and a soprano less than any."

Danglars smiled, and seemed to say, It is of no consequence. Then, hoping doubtless to effect his purpose, he said, "The prince and my daughter were universally admired yesterday. You were not of the party, M. de Morcerf?"

"What prince?" asked Albert.

"Prince Cavalcanti," said Danglars, who persisted in giving the young man that title.

"Pardon me," said Albert, "I was not aware he was a prince. And Prince Cavalcanti sang with Mademoiselle Eugénie yesterday? It must have been charming, indeed. I regret not having heard them. But I was unable to accept your invitation, having promised to accompany my mother to a German concert given by the Baronne de Château-Renaud." Then, after a silence, and as if the subject had not been mentioned, "May I be allowed," said Morcerf, "to pay my respects to Mademoiselle Danglars?"

"Wait a moment," said the banker, stopping the young man; "do you hear that delightful cavatina? Ta, ta, ta, ti, ta, ti, ta; it is charming. Let them finish; one moment! Bravo! bravi! brava!" The banker was enthusiastic in his applause.

"Indeed," said Albert, "it is exquisite; it is impossible to understand the music of his country better than Prince Cavalcanti does. You said 'prince,' did you not? But he can easily become one, if he is not already; it is no uncommon thing in Italy. But to return to the charming musicians, you should give us a treat, M. Danglars. Without telling them there is a stranger present, ask them to sing one more song; it is so delightful to hear music at a little distance in an obscurity, without being seen, without seeing, and consequently without annoying the performer, who thus is left free to yield himself to all the inspirations of his genius or to all the buoyancy of his spirits."

Danglars was quite annoyed by the young man's indifference. He took Monte Cristo aside. "What do you think of our lover?" said he.

"He appears cool! But then your word is given."

"Yes, doubtless I have promised to give my daughter to a man who loves her, but not to one who does not. Even if Albert had Cavalcanti's fortune, he is so proud that I would not care to see him marry her."

"Oh!" said Monte Cristo, "my fondness may blind me, but I assure you that M. de Morcerf is a charming young man, who will make your daughter happy, and who sooner or later will amount to something,—for the position of the father is excellent."

"Hem!" said Danglars.

"Why that doubt?"

"The past,—that obscurity on the past."

"But the past life of the father does not affect the son."

"That is true."

"Come, don't be obstinate; a month ago you wished for this marriage. You understand me,—I am in despair; it was at my house that you met that young Cavalcanti, of whom, I repeat to you, I know nothing."

"But I do."

"Have you made inquiry?"

"Is there any need of that? Would not one know at first sight with whom he had to deal? In the first place, he is rich."

"I am not sure of that."

"You are responsible for him, however."

"For fifty thousand livres,—a trifle."

"He has a distinguished education."

"Hem!" said Monte Cristo, in his turn.

"He is a musician."

"So are all Italians."

"Come, count, you do not do that young man justice."

"Well, I acknowledge it annoys me, knowing your connection with the Morcerf family, to see him throw himself in the way."

Danglars burst out laughing. "What a Puritan you are!" said he; "that happens every day."

"But you cannot break it off thus; the Morcerfs are depending on this union."

"Indeed?"

"Positively."

"Then let them explain themselves; you should give the father a hint, you are so intimate with the family."

"I? Where the devil did you find out that?"

"At their ball; it was apparent enough. Why, did not the countess, the proud Mercédès, the disdainful Catalane, who

will scarcely open her lips to her oldest acquaintances, take your arm, lead you into the garden into the private walks, and remain there for half an hour? Will you undertake to speak to the father?"

"Willingly, if you wish it."

"But so that this time the affair may be settled explicitly and positively. If he demands my daughter, let him fix the day, declare his conditions,—in short, let us either understand each other or quarrel. You understand,—no more delay."

"Yes, monsieur, I will give my attention to the subject."

"I do not say I expect him with pleasure, but I do expect him. A banker must, you know, be a slave to his promise." And Danglars sighed as M. Cavalcanti had done half an hour before.

"Bravi! bravo! brava!" cried Morcerf, imitating the banker, as he applauded the piece of music just finished.

Danglars began to look suspiciously at Morcerf, when some one came and whispered a few words to him. "I shall soon return," said the banker to Monte Cristo; "wait for me. I shall perhaps have something to say to you."

The baroness took advantage of her husband's absence to push open the door of her daughter's study, and M. Andrea, who was sitting before the piano with Mademoiselle Eugénie, started up with a spring. Albert bowed to Mademoiselle Danglars with a smile, who, not appearing in the least disturbed, returned his bow with her usual coolness. Cavalcanti was evidently embarrassed; he bowed to Morcerf, who replied with the most impertinent look possible. Then Albert launched out in praise of Mademoiselle Danglars's voice, and on his regret, after what he had just heard, that he had been unable to be present the previous evening.

Cavalcanti, being left alone, turned to Monte Cristo.

"Come," said Madame Danglars, "leave music and compliments, and let us go and take tea."

"Come, Louise," said Mademoiselle Danglars to her friend.

They passed into the next drawing-room, where tea was prepared. Just as they were beginning, in the English fashion, to leave the spoons in their cups, the door again opened, and Danglars entered, visibly agitated. Monte Cristo observed it particularly, and by a look asked the banker for an explanation.

"I have just received my courier from Greece," said Danglars.

"Ah! ah!" said the count; "that was the reason of your being called away from us."

"Yes."

"How is King Otho?" asked Albert, in the most sprightly tone.

Danglars cast another suspicious look towards him without answering; and Monte Cristo turned away to conceal the expression of pity which passed over his features, but which was gone in a moment.

"We shall go together, shall we not?" said Albert to the count.

"If you like," replied the latter.

Albert could not understand the banker's look, and turning to Monte Cristo, who understood it perfectly, "Did you see," said he, "how he looked at me?"

"Yes," said the count; "but did you think there was anything particular in his look?"

"Indeed I did; and what does he mean by his news from Greece?"

"How can I tell you?"

"Because I imagine you have correspondents in that country."

Monte Cristo smiled significantly.

"Stop," said Albert, "here he comes. I shall compliment Mademoiselle Danglars on her cameo, while the father talks to you."

"If you compliment her at all, let it be on her voice, at least," said Monte Cristo.

"No, every one would do that."

"My dear viscount, you are dreadfully impertinent."

Albert advanced towards Eugénie, smiling. Meanwhile, Danglars stooped to Monte Cristo's ear. "Your advice was excellent," said he; "there is a horrible history in those two words, 'Fernand' and 'Janina.'"

"Indeed!" said Monte Cristo.

"Yes, I will tell you all; but take away the young man. I cannot endure his presence."

"He is going with me. Shall I send the father to you?"

"With more reason than ever."

"Very well." The count made a sign to Albert; they bowed to the ladies and took their leave,—Albert perfectly indifferent to Mademoiselle Danglars's contempt, Monte Cristo reiterating his advice to Madame Danglars on the prudence a banker's wife should exercise in providing for the future. M. Cavalcanti remained master of the field.

CHAPTER LXXVII

HAYDÉE

SCARCELY had the count's horses cleared the angle of the boulevard, when Albert, turning towards the count, burst into a loud fit of laughter,—so loud, in fact, as to seem somewhat forced. "Well!" said he, "I will ask you the same question which Charles IX. put to Catherine de Medicis, after the massacre of St. Bartholomew. 'How have I played my little part?'"

"To what do you allude?" asked Monte Cristo.

"To the installation of my rival at M. Danglars's!"

"What rival?"

"Well, that is good! What rival? Why, your *protégé*, M. Andrea Cavalcanti!"

"Ah! no joking, viscount, if you please; M. Andrea is no *protégé* of mine,—at least, not in his relations with M. Danglars."

"And you would be to blame for not assisting him if the young man really needed your help in that quarter; but happily for me, he can dispense with it."

"What! do you think he is paying his addresses?"

"I am certain of it; his languishing looks and modulated tones when addressing Mademoiselle Danglars fully proclaim his intentions. He aspires to the hand of the proud Eugénie."

"What does that signify, so long as they favour your suit?"

"But it is not the case, my dear count; on the contrary, I am repulsed on both sides."

"On both sides?"

"It is so indeed; Mademoiselle Eugénie scarcely answers me, and Mademoiselle d'Armilly, her confidant, does not speak to me at all."

"But the father has the greatest regard for you," said Monte Cristo.

"He! oh, no! he has plunged a thousand daggers into my heart,—tragedy-weapons, I own, which instead of wounding sheath their points in their own handles, but daggers which he nevertheless believed to be real and deadly."

"Jealousy indicates affection."

"True; but I am not jealous."

"He is."

"Of whom,—of Debray?"

"No, of you."

"Of me? I will wager that before a week is past the door will be closed against me."

"You are mistaken, my dear viscount."

"Prove it to me."

"Do you wish me to do so?"

"Yes."

"Well! I am charged with the commission of endeavouring to induce M. le Comte de Morcerf to make some definite arrangement with the baron."

"By whom are you charged?"

"By the baron himself."

"Oh!" said Albert, with all the cajolery of which he was capable; "you surely will not do that, my dear count?"

"Certainly I shall, Albert, as I have promised to do it."

"Well!" said Albert, with a sigh, "it seems you are determined to marry me."

"I am determined to try and be on good terms with everybody, at all events," said Monte Cristo. "But speaking of Debray, how is it that I have not seen him lately at the baron's house?"

"There has been a quarrel."

"What, with the baroness?"

"No, with the baron."

"Has he perceived anything?"

"Ah! that is a good joke!"

"Do you think he suspects?" said Monte Cristo, with a charming *naïveté*.

"Where have you come from, my dear count?" said Albert.

"From Congo, if you will."

"It must be from farther off than even that."

"But what do I know of your Parisian husbands?"

"Oh, my dear count, husbands are pretty much the same everywhere; an individual husband of any country is a pretty fair specimen of the whole race."

"But then what can have led to the quarrel between Danglars and Debray? they seemed to understand each other so well!" said Monte Cristo, with renewed simplicity.

"Ah! now you are trying to penetrate into the mysteries of Isis, in which I am not initiated. When M. Andrea Cavalcanti has become one of the family, you can ask him that question."

The carriage stopped. "Here we are," said Monte Cristo. "It is only half-past ten o'clock; come in."

"Most willingly."

"My carriage shall take you back."

"No, thank you; I gave orders for my coupé to follow me."

"There it is, then," said Monte Cristo, as he stepped out of the carriage. They both went into the house. The drawing-room was lighted up; they entered it. "You will make tea for us, Baptistin," said the count. Baptistin left the room without waiting to answer, and in two seconds reappeared, bringing a tray well filled, which appeared to have sprung from the ground, like the repasts which we read of in fairy tales.

"Really, my dear count," said Morcerf, "what I admire in you is not so much your riches,—for perhaps there are people even wealthier than yourself; nor is it only your wit,—for Beaumarchais might have possessed as much,—but it is your manner of being served, without any questions, in a moment, in a second. It is as if they guessed what you wanted by your manner of ringing, and made a point of keeping everything you can possibly desire in constant readiness."

"What you say is perhaps true; they know my habits. For instance, you shall see; how do you wish to occupy yourself during tea-time?"

"Well, I should like to smoke."

Monte Cristo took the gong and struck it once. In about a second a private door opened, and Ali appeared, bringing two chibouques filled with excellent latakia.

"It is wonderful!" said Albert.

"Oh, no, it is very simple," replied Monte Cristo. "Ali knows that I generally smoke while I am taking my tea or coffee; he knows that I ordered tea, and he also knows that I brought you home with me. When I summon him, he understands the reason of my doing so, and as he comes from a country where hospitality is especially exercised with the pipe, he brings two chibouques instead of one."

"Certainly you give a commonplace explanation, but it is not the less true that you alone— Ah! but what do I hear!" and Morcerf inclined his head towards the door, through which sounds seemed to issue resembling those of a guitar.

"Upon my word, my dear viscount, you are fated to hear music this evening; you have escaped from the piano of Mademoiselle Danglars only to be attacked by the *guzla* of Haydée."

"Haydée! what an adorable name! Are there, then, really women who bear the name of Haydée anywhere but in Byron's poems?"

"Certainly there are. Haydée is a very uncommon name in France, but it is common enough in Albania and Epirus; it is

as if you said, for example, Chastity, Modesty, Innocence,—it is a kind of baptismal name, as you Parisians call it."

"Oh, that is charming!" said Albert; "how I should like to hear my countrywomen called Mademoiselle Goodness, Mademoiselle Silence, Mademoiselle Christian Charity! Only think, then, if Mademoiselle Danglars, instead of being called Claire Marie Eugénie, had been named Mademoiselle Chastity Modesty Innocence Danglars; what a fine effect that would produce in the publication of the banns!"

"Silence!" said the count, "do not joke in so loud a tone; Haydée may hear you, perhaps."

"And you think she would be angry?"

"No, certainly not," said the count, with a haughty expression.

"She is very amiable, then, is she not?" said Albert.

"It is not to be called amiability, it is her duty; a slave does not offend her master."

"Come; you are joking yourself now. Are there slaves still?"

"Undoubtedly, since Haydée is mine."

"Really, count, you do nothing, and have nothing like other people. The slave of M. le Comte de Monte Cristo! why, it is a rank of itself in France. At the rate in which you lavish money, it is a place that must be worth a hundred thousand crowns a year."

"A hundred thousand crowns! the poor girl originally possessed more than that; she was born to treasures in comparison with which those recorded in the *Thousand and One Nights* would be trivial."

"She must be a princess, then?"

"You are right; and one of the greatest in her country!"

"I thought so. But how did it happen that such a great princess became a slave?"

"How was it that Dionysius the Tyrant became a schoolmaster? The fortune of war, my dear viscount,—the caprice of fortune."

"And is her name a secret?"

"As regards the world it is; but not for you, my dear viscount, who are one of my friends, and who will be silent—will you not?—if you promise silence—"

"Oh! on my word of honour."

"You know the history of the Pacha of Janina?"

"Of Ali Tebelin? Certainly! it was in his service that my father made his fortune."

" True, I had forgotten that."

" Well! what is Haydée to Ali Tebelin? "

" His daughter only."

" What? the daughter of Ali Pacha? "

" Of Ali Pacha and the beautiful Vasiliki."

" And your slave? "

" Why, yes, to be sure."

" But how did she become so? "

" Why, I bought her one day, as I was passing through the market at Constantinople."

" Wonderful! With you, my dear count, one does not live, one dreams. Now, I am going perhaps to make an imprudent and thoughtless request, but—"

" Say on."

" But since you go out with Haydée, and sometimes even take her to the opera—"

" Well? "

" I think I may venture to ask you this favour."

" You may venture to ask me anything."

" Well, then, my dear count, present me to your princess."

" I will do so; but on two conditions."

" I accept them at once."

" The first is that you will never tell any one that I have granted the interview."

" Very well," said Albert, extending his hand; " I swear I will not."

" The second is that you will not tell her that your father ever served hers."

" I swear to that also."

" Enough, viscount; you will remember those two vows, will you not? But I know you to be a man of honour."

The count again struck the gong. Ali reappeared. " Tell Haydée," said he, " that I will take coffee with her; and give her to understand that I desire permission to present one of my friends to her." Ali bowed and left the room.

" Now, understand me," said the count, " no direct questions, my dear Morcerf; if you wish to know anything, tell me, and I will ask her."

" Agreed."

Ali reappeared for the third time, and drew back the tapestried hanging which concealed the door, to signify to his master and Albert that they were at liberty to pass on.

" Let us go in," said Monte Cristo.

Albert passed his hand through his hair and curled his mus-

tache, then, having satisfied himself as to his personal appearance, followed the count into the room, the latter having previously resumed his hat and gloves. Ali was stationed as a kind of advanced guard; and the door was kept by the three French waiting-women, under direction of Myrto. Haydée was awaiting her visitors in the first room of her suite of apartments, which was the drawing-room. Her large eyes were dilated with surprise and expectation, for it was the first time that any man, except Monte Cristo, had been accorded an entrance into her presence. She was sitting on a sofa placed in an angle of the room, with her legs crossed under her in the Eastern fashion, and had made for herself a nest, so to speak, in striped and embroidered silks,—the richest manufactures of the East. Near her was the instrument on which she had just been playing; in that attitude, amid those surroundings, she was charming. On perceiving Monte Cristo, she rose and welcomed him with a smile peculiar to herself, expressing at once obedience and love. Monte Cristo advanced towards her and extended his hand, which she raised to her lips.

Albert had remained near the door, fascinated by that strange beauty, which he then saw for the first time, and of which, in France, one could form no idea.

"Whom do you bring?" asked the young girl, in Romaic, of Monte Cristo; "is it a friend, a brother, a simple acquaintance, or an enemy."

"A friend," said Monte Cristo, in the same language.

"What is his name?"

"Comte Albert; it is the man whom I rescued from the hands of the banditti at Rome."

"In what language would you like me to converse with him?"

Monte Cristo turned to Albert. "Do you know modern Greek," asked he.

"Alas! no," said Albert; "nor even ancient Greek, my dear count. Never had Homer and Plato a more negligent, and I will even venture to say a more contemptuous student."

"Then," said Haydée, proving by her remark that she had quite understood Monte Cristo's question and Albert's answer, —"then I will speak either in French or Italian, if my lord wishes me to speak."

Monte Cristo reflected one instant. "You will speak in Italian," said he. Then, turning towards Albert, "It is a pity you do not understand either ancient or modern Greek, both of which Haydée speaks so fluently; the poor child will be obliged to talk to you in Italian, which will give you perhaps a false

idea of her." The count made a sign to Haydée. "Monsieur," said she to Morcerf, "you are most welcome as the friend of my lord and master." This was said in excellent Tuscan, and with that soft Roman accent which makes the language of Dante as sonorous as that of Homer. Then, turning to Ali, she directed him to bring coffee and pipes; and when he had left the room to execute the orders of his young mistress, she beckoned Albert to approach nearer to her. Monte Cristo and Morcerf drew their seats towards a small table, on which were arranged music, drawings, and vases of flowers. Ali then entered, bringing coffee and chibouques; as to M. Baptistin, this portion of the building was interdicted to him. Albert refused the pipe which the Nubian offered him.

"Oh, take it; take it!" said the count. "Haydée is almost as civilised as a Parisian; the smell of a Havana is disagreeable to her, but the tobacco of the East is a perfume, you know."

Ali left the room. The cups of coffee were all prepared, with the addition of a sugar-glass, which had been brought for Albert. Monte Cristo and Haydée took Arabian drink in the Arabian manner; that is to say, without sugar. Haydée took the porcelain cup in her little slender fingers, and conveyed it to her mouth with the simple pleasure of a child when eating or drinking something which it likes. At this moment two women entered, bringing salvers laden with ices and sherbet, which they placed on two small tables appropriated to that purpose.

"My dear host, and you, signora," said Albert, in Italian, "excuse my apparent stupidity. I am quite bewildered, and no wonder. Here I am in the heart of Paris; but a moment ago I heard the rumbling of the omnibuses and the tinkling of the bells of the lemonade-sellers, and now I feel as if I were suddenly transported to the East,—not such as I have seen it, but such as my dreams have painted it. Oh, signora, if I could but speak Greek, your conversation, added to the fairy scene which surrounds me, would furnish an evening which it would be impossible for me ever to forget."

"I speak sufficient Italian to enable me to converse with you, monsieur," said Haydée, quietly; "and if you like the East, I will do what I can to enable you to find it here."

"On what subject shall I converse with her?" said Albert, in a low tone to Monte Cristo.

"Just what you please. You may speak of her country and of her youthful reminiscences; or, if you like it better, you can talk of Rome, Naples, or Florence."

"Oh!" said Albert, "it is not worth while to be in the com-

pany of a Greek to converse with her as one would with a Parisian; let me speak to her of the East."

"Do so then; for of all themes which you could choose, that will be the most agreeable to her taste."

Albert turned towards Haydée. "At what age did you leave Greece, signora?" asked he.

"I left it when I was but five years old," replied Haydée.

"And have you any recollection of your country?"

"When I shut my eyes and think, I seem to see it all again. The soul has its organ of vision as well as the body; and while what is seen by the eye of the body is sometimes forgotten, that which the soul has seen it always remembers."

"And how far back into the past do your recollections extend?"

"I could scarcely walk when my mother, who was called Vasiliki, which means royal," said the young girl, raising her head proudly, "took me by the hand, and after putting in our purse all the money we possessed, we went out, both covered with veils, to solicit alms for the prisoners, saying, 'He who giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord.' Then when our purse was full, we returned to the palace, and without saying a word to my father, we sent it to the convent, where it was divided among the prisoners."

"And how old were you at that time?"

"I was three years old," said Haydée.

"Then you remember all which was passing around you when you were but three years old?" said Albert.

"All."

"Count," said Albert, in a low tone to Monte Cristo, "do allow the signora to tell me something of her history. You prohibited my mentioning my father's name to her; but perhaps she will allude to him of her own accord in the course of the recital, and you have no idea how delighted I should be to hear our name pronounced by such beautiful lips."

Monte Cristo turned to Haydée, and with an expression of countenance which commanded her to pay the most implicit attention to his words, he said in Greek, "Tell us the fate of your father, but neither the name of the traitor nor the treason."

Haydée sighed deeply, and a shade of sadness clouded her beautiful brow.

"What are you saying to her?" said Morcerf, in an undertone.

"I again reminded her that you were a friend, and that she need not conceal anything from you."

"Then," said Albert, "this pious pilgrimage in behalf of the prisoners was your first remembrance; what is the next?"

"Oh, then I remember as if it were but yesterday sitting under the shade of some sycamore-trees, on the borders of a lake, in the waters of which the trembling foliage was reflected as in a mirror. Under the oldest and thickest of these trees, reclining on cushions, sat my father; my mother was at his feet, and I, childlike, amused myself by playing with his long white beard, which descended upon his breast, or with the diamond-hilt of the cimeter attached to his girdle. Then from time to time there came to him an Albanian, who said something, to which I paid no attention, but which he always answered in the same tone of voice, 'Kill,' or 'Pardon.'"

"It is very strange," said Albert, "to hear such words proceed from the mouth of a young girl not on the stage, saying to one's self, 'This is not a fiction.' And how does France appear in your eyes, accustomed as they have been to gaze on such enchanted scenes?"

"I think it is a fine country," said Haydée; "but I see France as it really is, because I look on it with the eyes of a woman. Whereas my own country, which I can judge of only from the impression produced on my childish mind, always seems enveloped in a hazy atmosphere, luminous or sombre, according as my eyes behold my beautiful native land, or the place where I have endured bitter suffering."

"So young!" said Albert, yielding, in spite of himself, to the power of the commonplace, "is it possible that you can have known what suffering is except by name?"

Haydée turned her eyes towards Monte Cristo, who, making an almost imperceptible sign, murmured, "Go on."

"Nothing is ever so firmly impressed on the mind as the memory of early childhood; and with the exception of the two I have mentioned to you, all the remembrances of my youth are sorrowful."

"Speak, speak, signora!" said Albert; "I assure you that I am listening to you with inexpressible happiness."

Haydée answered his remark with a melancholy smile. "You wish me, then, to pass to my other remembrances?" said she.

"I beg you to do so," replied Albert.

"Well! I was but four years old, when one night I was suddenly awakened by my mother. We were in the palace of Janina; she snatched me from the cushions on which I was sleeping, and on opening my eyes I saw hers were filled with tears. She took me away without speaking. When I saw her

weeping, I began to cry too. 'Silence, child!' said she. At other times, in spite of maternal endearments or threats, I had, with a child's caprice, been accustomed to indulge my feelings of sorrow or anger by crying as much as I felt inclined; but on this occasion there was such an intonation of terror in my mother's voice that I ceased crying instantly. She bore me rapidly away. I saw then that we were descending a large staircase; in advance of us, all my mother's servants, carrying trunks, bags, ornaments, jewels, and purses of gold, descended precipitately the same staircase. Behind the women came a guard of twenty men, armed with long guns and pistols, and dressed in the costume with which you have become acquainted in France since Greece has become a nation. You may imagine there was something startling and ominous," said Haydée, shaking her head, and turning pale at the mere remembrance of the scene, "in this long file of slaves and women only half-aroused from sleep,—or at least, so they appeared to me, who was myself scarcely awake. Here and there, on the walls of the staircase, were reflected gigantic shadows, which trembled in the flickering light of the pine-torches, till they seemed to reach to the vaulted roof above.

"'Quick!' said a voice at the end of the gallery. This voice made every one bow before it, as the wind, passing over a plain, bends a field of corn. As for me, it made me tremble. That voice was my father's. He marched the last, clothed in his splendid robes, and holding in his hand the carbine with which your emperor presented him. He was leaning on the shoulder of his favourite Selim, and he drove us all before him, as a shepherd would his straggling flock. My father," said Haydée, raising her head, "was that illustrious man known in Europe under the name of Ali Tebelin, Pacha of Janina, and before whom Turkey trembled."

Albert, without knowing why, started on hearing these words pronounced with an indefinable accent of pride and dignity; it appeared to him as if there was something supernaturally gloomy and terrible in the expression which gleamed from the brilliant eyes of Haydée at this moment, when like a Pythoness evoking a spectre, she revived the remembrance of that bloody figure to which his terrible death gave a gigantic appearance in the eyes of Europe.

"Soon," said Haydée, "we halted on our march, and found ourselves on the borders of a lake. My mother pressed me to her throbbing heart, and at the distance of a few paces I saw my father, who was glancing anxiously around. Four marble

steps led down to the water's edge, and below them was a boat floating on the water. From where we stood I could see, in the middle of the lake, a large black mass; it was the kiosk to which we were going. This kiosk appeared to me to be at a considerable distance, perhaps on account of the darkness of the night, which prevented any object from being more than partially discerned. We stepped into the boat. I remember well that the oars made no noise whatever in striking the water, and when I leaned over to ascertain the cause, I saw they were muffled with the sashes of our Palicares. Besides the rowers, the boat contained only the women, my father, mother, Selim, and myself. The Palicares had remained on the shore of the lake, ready to cover our retreat; they were kneeling on the lowest of the marble steps, and in that manner intended making a rampart of the three others, in case of pursuit. Our boat flew before the wind. 'Why does the boat go so fast?' asked I of my mother. 'Silence, child! Hush! we are flying.' I did not understand. Why should my father fly?—he, the all-powerful; he, before whom others were accustomed to fly; he, who had taken for his device, '*They hate me, then they fear me!*'

"It was, indeed, a flight which my father was trying to effect. I have been told since that the garrison of the castle of Janina, fatigued with long service—"

Here Haydée cast a significant glance at Monte Cristo, whose eyes had been riveted on her countenance during the whole course of her narrative. The young girl then continued, speaking slowly, like a person who is either inventing or suppressing some feature of the history which he is relating.

"You were saying, signora," said Albert, who was paying close attention to the recital, "that the garrison of Janina, fatigued with long service—"

"Had treated with the Seraskier Kourchid, who had been sent by the sultan to gain possession of the person of my father; it was then that Ali Tebelin took the resolution of retiring, after having sent to the sultan a French officer in whom he reposed great confidence, to the asylum which he had long before prepared for himself, and which he called *kataphygion*, or the refuge."

"And this officer," asked Albert, "do you remember his name, signora?"

Monte Cristo exchanged a rapid glance with the young girl, which was quite unperceived by Albert.

"No," said she, "I do not remember it just at this moment; but if it should occur to me presently, I will tell you."

Albert was on the point of pronouncing his father's name, when Monte Cristo gently held up his finger in token of reproach; the young man recollected his vow and was silent.

"It was towards this kiosk that we were rowing. A ground-floor, ornamented with arabesques, bathing its terraces in the water, and another floor, looking on the lake, was all which was visible to the eye. But beneath the ground-floor, stretching out into the island, was a large subterranean cavern, to which my mother, myself, and the women were conducted. In this place were sixty thousand purses and two hundred barrels; the purses contained twenty-five millions of money in gold, and the barrels were filled with thirty thousand pounds of gunpowder.

"Near these barrels stood Selim, my father's favourite, whom I mentioned to you just now. It was his duty to watch day and night a lance, at the end of which was a lighted match, and he had orders to blow up all,—kiosk, guards, women, gold, and Ali Tebelin himself,—at the first signal given by my father. I remember well that the slaves, convinced of the precarious tenure on which they held their lives, passed whole days and nights in praying, crying, and groaning. As for me, I can never forget the pale complexion and black eye of the young soldier; and whenever the Angel of Death summons me to another world, I am quite sure that he will seem to me like Selim. I cannot tell you how long we remained in this state; at that period I did not even know what time meant. Sometimes, but very rarely, my father summoned my mother and me to the terrace of the palace; these were hours of recreation to me, who never saw anything in the dismal cavern but the gloomy countenances of the slaves and the fiery lance of Selim. My father, sitting before a large opening, searched with serious gaze the far horizon and examined attentively every black speck which appeared on the lake, while my mother, reclining by his side, rested her head on his shoulder, and I played at his feet, admiring, with that childish wonder which enlarges all objects, the heights of Pindus which stood out on the horizon, the castle of Janina rising white and angular from the blue waters of the lake, and the immense masses of dark verdure which, viewed in the distance, gave the idea of lichens clinging to the rocks, but which were in reality gigantic fir-trees and myrtles.

"One morning my father sent for us; we found him calm, but paler than usual. 'Take courage, Vasiliki,' said he; 'to-day arrives the firman of the master, and my fate will be decided. If my pardon be complete, we shall return triumphant to Janina; if the news be inauspicious, we must fly this night.'

'But supposing our enemy should not allow us to do so?' said my mother. 'Oh! make yourself easy on that head,' said Ali, smiling; 'Selim and his flaming lance will settle that matter. They would be glad to see me dead, but they would not like themselves to die with me.'

"My mother answered only by sighs to these consolations, which did not come from my father's heart. She prepared the iced water which he was constantly drinking, for since his sojourn at the kiosk, he had been parched by the most violent fever; she anointed his white beard with perfumed oil, and lighted his chibouque, which he sometimes smoked for hours together, quietly watching the wreaths of vapour, which, ascending in spiral clouds, gradually mixed itself with the surrounding atmosphere. Presently he made such a sudden movement that it frightened me. Then, without taking his eyes from the object which had first attracted his attention, he asked for his telescope. My mother gave it him, and as she did so, looked whiter than the marble against which she leaned. I saw my father's hand tremble. 'A boat!—two! three!' murmured my father, 'four!' He then rose, seizing his arms and priming his pistols. 'Vasiliki,' said he to my mother, trembling perceptibly, 'the instant approaches which will decide everything. In the space of half an hour we shall know the emperor's answer. Go into the cavern with Haydée.' 'I will not quit you,' said Vasiliki; 'if you die, my lord, I will die with you.' 'Go to Selim!' cried my father. 'Adieu, my lord!' murmured my mother, obediently, and bowed as by the approach of death. 'Take away Vasiliki!' said my father to his Palicares.

"As for me, I had been forgotten in the general confusion. I ran towards Ali Tebelin; he saw me hold out my arms to him, and he stooped down and pressed my forehead with his lips. Oh, how distinctly I remember that kiss! it was the last he ever gave me, and I feel as if it were still warm on my forehead. On descending, we distinguished through the lattice-work several boats which were gradually becoming more distinct to our view. At first they had appeared like black specks, and now they looked like birds skimming the surface of the waves. During this time, in the kiosk, at the feet of my father, were seated twenty Palicares, concealed from view by an angle of the wall, and watching with eager eyes the arrival of the boats; they were armed with their long guns inlaid with mother-of-pearl and silver, and cartouches in great numbers were lying scattered on the floor. My father looked at his watch, and

paced up and down with a countenance expressive of the greatest anguish. This was the scene which presented itself to my view when I quitted my father after that last kiss. My mother and I traversed the gloomy passage leading to the cavern. Selim was still at his post, and smiled sadly on us as we entered. We brought our cushions from the other end of the cavern and sat down by Selim. In great dangers the devoted ones cling to each other; and young as I was, I quite understood that some imminent danger was hanging over our heads."

Albert had often heard, not from his father,—for he never spoke on the subject,—but from strangers, the description of the last moments of the Vizier of Janina. He had read different accounts of his death, but this history seemed to borrow new life from the voice and expression of the young girl; the living accent and the melancholy expression of countenance at once charmed and horrified him. As to Haydée, these terrible reminiscences seemed to have overpowered her for the moment, for she ceased speaking, her head leaning on her hand like a beautiful flower bowing beneath the violence of the storm, and her eyes, gazing on vacancy, indicated that she was mentally contemplating the green summit of the Pindus and the blue waters of the Lake of Janina, which, like a magic mirror, seemed to reflect the sombre picture which she sketched. Monte Cristo looked at her with an indescribable expression of interest and pity.

"Go on, my dear," said the count, in the Romaic language.

Haydée looked up abruptly, as if the sonorous tones of Monte Cristo's voice had awakened her from a dream, and resumed her narrative. "It was about four o'clock in the afternoon; and although the day was brilliant out of doors, we were enveloped in the gloomy darkness of the cavern. One solitary light was burning there; and it appeared like a star set in a heaven of blackness,—it was Selim's flaming lance. My mother was a Christian, and she prayed. Selim repeated from time to time these sacred words, 'God is great!' However, my mother had still some hope. As she was coming down, she thought she recognised the French officer who had been sent to Constantinople, and in whom my father placed so much confidence, for he knew that all the soldiers of the French emperor were naturally noble and generous. She advanced some steps towards the staircase, and listened. 'They are approaching,' said she; 'perhaps they bring us peace and liberty!' 'What do you fear, Vasiliki?' said Selim, in a voice at once so gentle and yet

so proud. 'If they do not bring us peace, we will give them war; if they do not bring life, we will give them death.' And he quickened the flame of his lance with a movement which gave him a resemblance to Dionysius of ancient Crete. But I, who was only a little child, was terrified by this undaunted courage, which appeared to me both ferocious and senseless; and I recoiled with horror from that frightful death in the air and in the flame.

"My mother experienced the same sensations, for I perceived that she trembled. 'Mamma, mamma,' said I, 'are we going to die?' And at the sound of my voice the slaves redoubled their prayers and lamentations. 'My child,' said Vasiliki, 'may God preserve you from ever wishing for that death which to-day you so much dread!' Then, whispering to Selim, she asked what were his master's orders. 'If he send me his poniard, it will signify that the emperor's intentions are not favourable, and I am to set fire to the powder; if on the contrary he send me his ring, it will be a sign that the emperor pardons him, and I am to extinguish the match and leave the magazine untouched.' 'My friend,' said my mother, 'when your master's order arrives, if it is the poniard which he sends, instead of despatching us by that horrible death which we both so much dread, you will mercifully kill us with this same poniard, will you not?' 'Yes, Vasiliki,' replied Selim, tranquilly.

"Suddenly we heard loud cries; we listened,—they were cries of joy. The name of the French officer who had been sent to Constantinople resounded on all sides among our Palicares; it was evident that he brought the answer of the emperor, and that it was favourable."

"And do you not remember the Frenchman's name?" said Morcerf, quite ready to aid the memory of the narrator. Monte Cristo made a sign to him to be silent.

"I do not recollect it," said Haydée, and continued: "The noise increased, steps were heard approaching. Some one was descending the stairs leading to the cavern. Selim made ready his lance. Soon a figure appeared in the grey twilight at the entrance of the cave, formed by the reflection of the few rays of daylight which had found their way into this gloomy retreat. 'Who are you?' cried Selim. 'But whoever you may be, I charge you not to advance another step.' 'Long live the emperor!' said the figure. 'He grants a full pardon to the Vizier Ali, and not only gives him his life, but restores to him his fortune and his possessions.' My mother uttered a cry of joy and clasped me to her bosom. 'Stop!' said Selim, seeing

that she was about to go out; 'you see I have not yet received the ring.' 'True,' said my mother. And she fell on her knees, at the same time holding me up towards heaven, as if she desired, while praying to God in my behalf, to lift me nearer to him."

And for the second time Haydée stopped, overcome by such violent emotion that the perspiration stood upon her pale brow; and her stifled voice seemed hardly able to find utterance, so parched and dry were her throat and lips. Monte Cristo poured a little iced water into a glass, and presented it to her, saying with a mildness in which was also a shade of command, "Courage." Haydée dried her eyes and continued:—

"By this time our eyes, habituated to the darkness, had recognised the messenger of the pacha,—it was a friend. Selim had also recognised him; but the brave young man knew but one duty,—to obey. 'In whose name do you come?' said he to him. 'I come in the name of our master, Ali Tebelin.' 'If you come from Ali himself,' cried Selim, 'you know what you were charged to remit to me?' 'Yes,' said the messenger; 'and I bring you his ring.' At these words he raised his hand above his head to show the token; but it was too far off, and there was not light enough to enable Selim, where he was standing, to distinguish and recognise the object presented to his view. 'I do not see what you have in your hand,' said Selim. 'Approach, then,' said the messenger, 'or I will come nearer to you, if you prefer it.' 'I will agree to neither one nor the other,' replied the young soldier; 'place the object which I desire to see in the ray of light which shines there, and retire while I examine it.' 'Be it so,' said the envoy; and he retired, after having first deposited the token agreed on in the place pointed out to him by Selim.

"Oh, how our hearts palpitated! for it did indeed seem to be a ring which was placed there. But was it my father's ring? Selim, still holding in his hand the lighted match, walked towards the opening in the cavern, and aided by the faint light which streamed in through the mouth of the cave, picked up the token. 'It is well!' said he, kissing it, 'it is my master's ring!' And throwing the match on the ground, he trampled on it and extinguished it. The messenger uttered a cry of joy, and clapped his hands. At this signal four soldiers of the Seraskier Kourchid suddenly appeared, and Selim fell, pierced by five blows. Each man had stabbed him separately; and intoxicated by their crime, though still pale with fear, they sought all over the cavern to discover if there was any fear of fire, after which they amused themselves by rolling on the bags of gold. At this moment my

mother seized me in her arms, and bounding lightly along numerous turnings and windings known only to ourselves, she arrived at a private staircase of the kiosk, where was a scene of frightful tumult and confusion. The lower rooms were entirely filled with the Tchodoars of Kourchid; that is to say, with our enemies. Just as my mother was on the point of pushing open a small door, we heard the voice of the pacha sounding in a loud and threatening tone. My mother applied her eye to the crack between the boards; I luckily found a small opening, which afforded me a view of the apartment and what was passing within. 'What do you want?' said my father to some people who were holding a paper inscribed with characters of gold. 'What we want,' replied one of them, 'is to communicate to you the will of his Highness. Do you see this firman?' 'I do,' said my father. 'Well, read it; he demands your head.'

"My father answered with a loud laugh, which was more frightful than threats would have been, and he had not ceased when two reports of pistols were heard; he had fired them himself, and had killed two men. The Palicares, who were prostrated at my father's feet, now sprang up and fired; and the room was filled with fire and smoke. At the same instant the firing began on the other side, and the balls penetrated the boards all round us. Oh, how noble did the grand vizier, my father, look at that moment, in the midst of the balls, his cimeter in his hand, and his face blackened with the powder of his enemies! and how he terrified them, even then, and made them fly before him! 'Selim! Selim!' cried he, 'guardian of the fire, do your duty!' 'Selim is dead!' replied a voice which seemed to come from the depths of the earth, 'and you are lost, Ali!' At the same moment an explosion was heard, and the flooring of the room was broken all around my father; the Tchodoars were firing through the floor; three or four Palicares fell with their bodies literally ploughed with wounds.

"My father roared; he plunged his fingers into the holes which the balls had made, and tore up one of the planks entire. But immediately through this opening twenty more shots were fired; and the flame, rushing up like fire from the crater of a volcano, soon gained the tapestry, which it quickly devoured. In the midst of all this frightful tumult and these terrific cries, two reports, fearfully distinct, followed by two shrieks more heart-rending than all, froze me with terror; these two shots had mortally wounded my father, and it was he who had given utterance to these frightful cries. However, he remained

standing, clinging to a window. My mother tried to force the door, that she might go and die with him, but it was fastened on the inside. All around him were lying the Palicares, writhing in convulsive agonies; while two or three, who were only slightly wounded, were trying to escape by springing from the windows. At this crisis the whole flooring suddenly gave way. My father fell on one knee, and at the same moment twenty hands were thrust forth, armed with sabres, pistols, and poniards, twenty blows at once were directed against one man; and my father disappeared in a whirlwind of fire and smoke kindled by these howling demons, and which seemed like hell itself opening beneath his feet. I felt myself fall to the ground; my mother had fainted."

Haydée's arms fell by her side, and she uttered a deep groan, at the same time looking towards the count, as if to ask if he were satisfied with her obedience to his commands. Monte Cristo rose and approached her; he took her hand, and said to her in Romaic, "Calm yourself, my dear child, and take courage in remembering that there is a God who will punish traitors."

"It is a frightful story, count," said Albert, terrified at the paleness of Haydée's countenance; "and I reproach myself now for having been so cruelly indiscreet."

"Oh, it is nothing!" said Monte Cristo. Then, placing his hand on the head of the young girl, he continued, "Haydée is very courageous; and she sometimes even finds consolation in the recital of her misfortunes."

"Because, my lord," said Haydée, eagerly, "my miseries recall to me the remembrance of your goodness."

Albert looked at her with curiosity, for she had not yet related what he most desired to know; namely, how she had become the slave of the count. Haydée saw the same desire expressed in the countenances of her two auditors; she exclaimed, "When my mother recovered her senses we were before the seraskier. 'Kill me,' said she, 'but spare the honour of the widow of Ali."

"It is not I to whom you must address yourself," said Kourchid.

"'To whom, then?'

"'To your new master.'

"'Who and where is he?'

"'He is here.'

"And Kourchid pointed out one of those who had most contributed to the death of my father," said Haydée, in a tone of chastened anger.

"Then," said Albert, "you became the property of this man?"

"No," replied Haydée, "he did not dare to keep us; so we were sold to some slave-merchants who were going to Constantinople. We traversed Greece, and arrived, half dead, at the imperial gates. They were surrounded by a crowd of people, who opened a way for us to pass, when suddenly my mother, having directed her eye to the object which was attracting their attention, uttered a piercing cry and fell to the ground, pointing, as she did so, to a head which was placed over the gates, and beneath which were inscribed these words,—

'THIS IS THE HEAD OF ALI TEBELIN, PACHA OF JANINA.'

"I cried bitterly, and tried to raise my mother from the earth, but she was dead! I was taken to the slave-market, and was purchased by a rich Armenian. He caused me to be instructed, gave me masters, and when I was thirteen years of age he sold me to the Sultan Mahmoud."

"Of whom I bought her," said Monte Cristo, "as I told you, Albert, with the emerald which formed a match to the one I had made into a box for the purpose of holding my pastilles of hashish."

"Oh! you are good, you are great, my lord!" said Haydée, kissing the count's hand; "and I am very fortunate in belonging to such a master."

Albert remained quite bewildered with all that he had seen and heard. "Come, finish your cup of coffee," said Monte Cristo; "the history is ended."

CHAPTER LXXVIII

NEWS FROM JANINA

IF Valentine could have seen the trembling step and agitated countenance of Franz when he quitted the chamber of M. Noirtier, even she would have been constrained to pity him. Villefort had given utterance to a few incoherent sentences and then retired to his study, where he received about two hours afterwards the following letter:—

"After the revelation made this morning, M. Noirtier de Villefort must see the impossibility of an alliance between his family and that of M. Franz d'Epinay. M. Franz d'Epinay is shocked and astonished that M. de Villefort, who appeared to know the events related this morning, has not anticipated him in this announcement."

No one who had seen the magistrate at this moment, prostrated by the blow, could have believed that he had anticipated it; in fact, he had never thought that his father would carry candour, or rather rudeness, so far as to relate such a history. And in justice to Villefort it must be understood that M. Noirtier, who never cared for the opinion of his son on any subject, had always omitted to explain the affair to Villefort, so that he had all his life entertained the belief that the General de Quesnel, or the Baron d'Epinay, as he was alternately styled, according as the speaker wished to identify him by his own family name or by the title which had been conferred on him, fell the victim of assassination, and not that he was killed fairly in a duel. This stern letter from a man until then so polite and respectful struck a mortal blow at the pride of Villefort.

Hardly had Villefort returned to his cabinet, when his wife entered. The sudden departure of Franz, after being summoned by M. Noirtier, had so much astonished every one that the position of Madame de Villefort, left alone with the notary and the witnesses, became every moment more embarrassing. Determined to bear it no longer, she rose and left the room, saying that she would go and make inquiries. M. de Villefort's communications on the subject were limited to the statement that an explanation had taken place between M. Noirtier, M. d'Epinay, and himself, and that the marriage of Valentine and Franz would consequently be broken off. This was an awkward and unpleasant thing to have to report to those who were awaiting her return. She therefore contented herself with saying that M. Noirtier having at the commencement of the discussion been attacked by a sort of apoplectic fit, the signing of the contract would be postponed for a few days. This news, false as it was, following so singularly in the train of two calamities of the same kind, evidently astonished the auditors, and they retired without a remark. During this time Valentine, at once terrified and happy, after having embraced and thanked the feeble old man for thus breaking with a single blow the chain which she had been accustomed to consider as indissoluble, had asked leave to retire to her own room in order to recover her composure; and Noirtier had granted by a sign the permission which she solicited. But instead of going to her own room, Valentine, having once gained her liberty, entered the gallery, and opening a small door at the end of it, found herself at once in the garden. In the midst of all the strange events which had crowded one on the other, an indefinable sentiment of dread had taken possession of Valentine's mind. She expected every

moment that she should see Morrel appear, pale and trembling, to forbid the signing of the contract, like the Laird of Ravenswood in *The Bride of Lammermoor*. It was high time for her to make her appearance at the gate. Maximilian had conjectured what was intended when he saw Franz leave the cemetery with M. de Villefort. He had followed M. d'Epinay, had seen him enter, afterwards go out, and then re-enter with Albert and Château-Renaud. There was no longer any room for doubt. He had hastened to his garden-lot to await the event,—very certain that Valentine would hasten to him as soon as she should be set at liberty. He was not mistaken; looking through the crevices of the wooden partition, he saw the young girl, who, throwing aside all her usual precautions, hastened to the gate. The first glance which Maximilian directed towards her entirely reassured him; and the first words she pronounced made his heart bound with delight.

"We are saved!" said Valentine.

"Saved!" repeated Morrel, not being able to believe in such happiness; "by whom?"

"By my grandfather. Oh, Morrel! love him for all his goodness to us!"

Morrel swore to love him with all his soul; and the oath cost him no effort, for at that moment it was not enough for him to love Noirtier as a friend or as a father,—he adored him as a god.

"But tell me, Valentine, how has it all been effected? What strange means has he employed?"

Valentine was on the point of relating all that had passed; but she suddenly remembered that in doing so she must reveal a terrible secret which concerned others as well as her grandfather, and she said, "At some future time I will tell you all about it."

"But when will that be?"

"When I am your wife."

The conversation had now turned to a topic so pleasing to Morrel that he was ready to accede to anything; he felt also that he might well be content with what he knew, and that it was enough for one day. However, he would not leave without Valentine's promise that he should see her the next day in the evening. Valentine promised all that Morrel required of her; and certainly it was less difficult now for her to believe that she should marry Maximilian than it was an hour ago to assure herself that she should not marry Franz.

During the time occupied by the interview we have just detailed, Madame de Villefort had gone to visit M. Noirtier. The

old man looked at her with that stern and forbidding expression with which he was accustomed to receive her.

"Monsieur," said she, "it is superfluous for me to tell you that Valentine's marriage is broken off, since it was here that the rupture took place."

Noirtier's countenance remained immovable.

"But one thing I can tell you of which I do not think you are aware; that is, that I have always been opposed to this marriage, and that the contract was entered into entirely without my consent or approbation."

Noirtier regarded his daughter-in-law with the look of a man desiring an explanation.

"Now that this marriage, which I know you so much disliked, is done away with, I come to you with a request which neither M. de Villefort nor Valentine could properly make."

Noirtier's eyes asked what the request was.

"I come to entreat you, monsieur," continued Madame de Villefort, "as the only one who has the right of doing so, inasmuch as I am the only one who will receive no personal benefit from the transaction,—I come to entreat you to restore, not your love, for that she has always possessed, but your fortune to your granddaughter."

There was a doubtful expression in Noirtier's eyes; he was evidently trying to discover the motive of this proceeding, and he could not succeed in doing so.

"May I hope, monsieur," said Madame de Villefort, "that your intentions accord with my request."

Noirtier made a sign that they did.

"In that case, monsieur," rejoined Madame de Villefort, "I will withdraw, at the same time grateful and happy." She then bowed to M. Noirtier and retired.

The next day M. Noirtier sent for the notary; the first will was torn up and a second made, in which he left the whole of his fortune to Valentine on condition that she should never be separated from him. It was then generally reported that Mademoiselle de Villefort, the heiress of the Marquis and Marquise de Saint-Méran, and restored to her grandfather's favour, would ultimately be in possession of an income of three hundred thousand livres.

While the dissolution of the marriage-contract was taking place at the house of M. de Villefort, the Comte de Morcerf had received Monte Cristo's visit; and to show his consideration for Danglars, he put on his uniform of lieutenant-general, which he ornamented with all his crosses, and thus attired, ordered his

finest horses and drove to the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin. Danglars was balancing his monthly accounts, and it was not the most favourable moment for finding him in good humour. At the first sight of his old friend, Danglars assumed his majestic air and settled himself in his easy-chair. Morcerf, usually so stiff and formal, accosted the banker in an affable and smiling manner; and feeling sure that the overture he was about to make would be well received, omitting all diplomatic preliminaries, he went at once straight to the point.

"Well, baron," said he, "here I am at last; some time has elapsed since our plans were formed, and they are not yet executed."

Morcerf expected to see the face of the banker brighten at these words, having attributed his cold demeanour to his own silence; but on the contrary, to his great surprise, that face became still more stern and impassive.

"To what do you allude, Monsieur the Count?" said Danglars, as if he were trying in vain to guess at the meaning of the general's words.

"Ah!" said Morcerf; "I see you are a stickler for forms, my dear monsieur, and you would remind me that the ceremonial rites should not be omitted. I beg your pardon, but as I have but one son, and it is the first time I have ever thought of marrying him, I am still serving my apprenticeship; come, I will reform." And Morcerf, with a forced smile, rose, and making a low bow to M. Danglars, said, "Monsieur the Baron, I have the honour of asking of you the hand of Mademoiselle Eugénie Danglars for my son, Vicomte Albert de Morcerf."

But Danglars, instead of receiving this address in the favourable manner which Morcerf had expected, knit his brow, and without inviting the count, who was still standing, to take a seat, he said, "Monsieur the Count, it will be necessary to reflect before I give you an answer."

"To reflect!" said M. de Morcerf, more and more astonished; "have you not had enough time for reflection during the eight years which have elapsed since this marriage was first discussed between us?"

"Monsieur the Count," said the banker, "things happen every day to make us revise conclusions which we had thought were settled."

"I do not understand you, Monsieur the Baron," said Morcerf.

"What I mean to say is this, monsieur,—that during the last fortnight unforeseen circumstances have occurred—"

"Excuse me," said Morcerf; "but is it a play we are acting?"

"A play?"

"Yes, for it is like one; pray let us come more to the point, and endeavour to understand each other."

"That is quite my desire."

"You have seen M. de Monte Cristo, have you not?"

"I see him very often," said Danglars, drawing himself up; "he is a particular friend of mine."

"Well, in one of your late conversations with him you said that I appeared to be forgetful and irresolute concerning this marriage."

"I did say so."

"Well, here I am. I am neither forgetful nor irresolute, you see, since I come to remind you of your promise."

Danglars did not answer.

"Have you so soon changed your mind," added Morcerf, "or have you only provoked my request that you may have the pleasure of seeing me humiliated?"

Danglars, seeing that if he continued the conversation in the same tone in which he had begun it, the affair might take a form unfavourable to him, turned to Morcerf and said, "Monsieur the Count, you have a right to be surprised at my reserve,—I admit that,—and I assure you it costs me much to act in such a manner towards you; but believe me when I say that imperative necessity compels me."

"These are all empty words, my dear monsieur," said Morcerf. "They might satisfy a chance acquaintance, but the Comte de Morcerf is not a chance acquaintance; and when a man like him comes to another, recalls to him his plighted word, and this man fails to redeem the pledge, he has at least a right to exact from him a good reason for so doing."

Danglars was a coward, but did not wish to appear so; he was piqued at the tone which Morcerf had just assumed. "I am not without a good reason for my conduct," he replied.

"What do you mean to say?"

"I mean to say that I have a good reason, but that it is difficult to explain."

"You must be aware, at all events, that I am not satisfied with your reticence; but one thing at least is clear,—that you decline allying yourself with my family."

"No, monsieur," said Danglars; "I suspend my decision, that is all."

"And do you really flatter yourself that I shall yield to all your caprices, and quietly and humbly await the time when I may be restored to your favour?"

"Then, Monsieur the Count, if you will not wait, we must look upon these projects as if they had never been entertained."

The count bit his lips till the blood started, to prevent the ebullition of anger which his proud and irritable temper scarcely allowed him to restrain. Understanding, however, that in the present state of things the laugh would decidedly be against him, he had already taken some steps towards the door of the salon, when on second thought he returned. A cloud passed over his brow, leaving there, in place of offended pride, the traces of a vague uneasiness. "My dear Danglars," said he, "we have been acquainted for many years, and consequently we ought to make some allowance for each other's feelings. You owe me an explanation; and really it is but fair that I should know what circumstance has occurred to deprive my son of your favour."

"It is from no personal ill-feeling towards the viscount; that is all I can say, monsieur," replied Danglars, who resumed his insolent manner as soon as he perceived that Morcerf was a little softened and calmed down.

"And towards whom do you bear this personal ill-feeling, then?" said Morcerf, in an altered tone, and turning pale.

The expression of the count's face had not remained unperceived by the banker; he fixed on him a look of greater assurance than before, and said, "You may perhaps be better satisfied that I should not go farther into particulars."

A nervous trembling, caused, doubtless, by suppressed rage, shook the frame of the count; making a violent effort over himself, he said, "I have a right to insist on your giving me an explanation. Is it Madame de Morcerf who has displeased you? Is it my fortune which you find insufficient? Is it because my opinions differ from yours?"

"Nothing of the kind, monsieur," replied Danglars; "if such had been the case, I only should have been to blame, inasmuch as I was aware of all these things when I made the engagement. No, do not seek any longer to discover the reason. I really am quite ashamed to have been the cause of your undergoing such severe self-examination; let us drop the subject, and adopt the middle course,—namely, delay, which implies neither a rupture nor an engagement. There is no hurry. My daughter is only seventeen years old, and your son twenty-one. While we wait, time will go on, bringing a succession of events. Things which in the evening look dark and obscure appear but too clearly in the light of morning; and sometimes in a single day the most cruel calumnies fall to the ground."

"Calumnies, did you say, monsieur?" cried Morcerf, turning livid. "Does any one dare to slander me?"

"Monsieur the Count, I told you that I considered it best to avoid all explanation."

"Then, monsieur, I am patiently to submit to your refusal?"

"It is especially painful to me, monsieur,—yes, more painful to me than to you; for I had reckoned on the honour of your alliance, and the breaking off of a marriage-contract always injures the lady more than the gentleman."

"Enough, monsieur," said Morcerf, "we will speak no more on the subject." And clinching his gloves with passion, he left the apartment.

Danglars remarked that during the whole conversation Morcerf had never once dared to ask if it was on his own account that Danglars recalled his word.

That evening there was a long conference between several friends; and M. Cavalcanti, who had remained in the drawing-room with the ladies, was the last to leave the house of the banker.

The next morning as soon as he awoke, Danglars asked for the newspapers. They were brought to him. He laid aside three or four, and took up *L'Impartial;* it was the paper of which Beauchamp was the chief editor. He hastily tore off the cover, opened the journal with nervous precipitation, passed contemptuously over *le premier Paris;* and arriving at the miscellaneous intelligence, stopped with a malicious smile at a paragraph beginning, "A correspondent writes from Janina." "Very good!" observed Danglars, after having read the paragraph; "here is a little article on Colonel Fernand, which, if I am not mistaken, will relieve me of explanations to the Comte de Morcerf."

At the same moment,—that is, at nine o'clock in the morning,—Albert de Morcerf, dressed in a black coat carefully buttoned, with an agitated manner and abrupt speech presented himself at Monte Cristo's house in the Champs Elysées, and upon inquiring for the count was informed by the porter that his excellency had gone out about half an hour previously.

"Did he take Baptistin with him?"

"No, Monsieur the Viscount."

"Call him, then; I wish to speak to him."

The *concierge* went to seek the *valet de chambre,* and returned with him in an instant.

"My good friend," said Albert, "I beg pardon for my

intrusion; but I was anxious to know from your own mouth if your master was really out."

"He is really out, monsieur," replied Baptistin.

"Out, even to me?"

"I know how happy my master always is to receive Monsieur the Viscount," said Baptistin; "and I should therefore never think of including him in any general order."

"You are right; and now I wish to see him on an affair of great importance. Do you think it will be long before he returns?"

"No, I think not, for he ordered his breakfast at ten o'clock."

"Well, I will go and take a turn in the Champs Elysées, and at ten o'clock I will return here; meanwhile, if Monsieur the Count should come in, will you beg him not to go out again without seeing me?"

"You may depend on my doing so, monsieur," said Baptistin.

Albert left the *fiacre* in which he had come standing at the door of the count, intending to take a turn on foot. As he was passing the Allée des Veuves, he thought he saw the count's horses standing at Gosset's shooting-gallery; he approached, and recognised the coachman. "Is Monsieur the Count shooting in the gallery?" said Morcerf.

"Yes, monsieur," replied the coachman.

While he was speaking, Albert had heard the report of two or three pistol-shots. He entered, and on his way met the waiter. "Excuse me, Monsieur the Viscount," said the lad; "but will you have the kindness to wait a moment?"

"What for, Philippe?" asked Albert, who, being a constant visitor there, did not understand this opposition to his entrance.

"Because the person who is now in the gallery prefers being alone, and never practises in the presence of any one."

"Not even before you, Philippe? Then who loads his pistol?"

"His servant."

"A Nubian?"

"A negro."

"It is he, then."

"Do you know this gentleman?"

"Yes, and I am come to look for him; he is a friend of mine."

"Oh! that is quite another thing, then. I will go immediately and inform him of your arrival." And Philippe, urged by his own curiosity, entered the gallery; a second afterwards Monte Cristo appeared on the threshold.

"I ask your pardon, my dear count," said Albert, "for

following you here; and I must first tell you that it was not the fault of your servants that I did so, I alone am to blame for the indiscretion. I went to your house, and they told me you were out, but that you would return at ten o'clock for breakfast. I was walking about to pass away the time till ten o'clock, when I caught sight of your carriage and horses."

"What you have just said induces me to hope that you intend breakfasting with me."

"No, thank you, I am thinking of other things besides breakfast just now; perhaps we may take that meal at a later hour and in worse company."

"What on earth are you talking of?"

"I am to fight to-day."

"You? and what for?"

"I am going to fight—"

"Yes, I understand that; but what is the quarrel? People fight for all sorts of reasons, you know."

"I fight in the cause of honour."

"Ah! that is something serious."

"So serious that I come to beg you to render me a service."

"What is it?"

"To be my second."

"That is a serious matter, and we will not discuss it here; let us speak of nothing till we get home. Ali, bring me some water."

The count turned up his sleeves, and passed into the little vestibule where the gentlemen were accustomed to wash their hands after shooting.

"Come in, Monsieur the Viscount," said Philippe, in a low tone, "and I will show you something droll." Morcerf entered, and instead of the usual mark, he perceived some playing-cards fixed against the wall. At a distance Albert thought it was a complete suit, for he counted from the ace to the ten.

"Ah! ah!" said Albert, "I see you were preparing for a game of cards."

"No," said the count, "I was making a suit of cards."

"How is that?" said Albert.

"Those are really aces and twos which you see, but my balls have turned them into threes, fives, sevens, eights, nines, and tens."

Albert approached. In fact, the balls had actually pierced the cards in the exact places which the painted signs would otherwise have occupied, the lines and distances being as exact as if they had been ruled. On his way to the target Morcerf

picked up, besides, two or three swallows which had been so imprudent as to fly within pistol-shot of the count, and which the count had killed.

"The devil!" said Morcerf.

"What would you have, my dear viscount?" said Monte Cristo, wiping his hands on the towel which Ali had brought him; "I must occupy my leisure moments. But come, I am waiting for you."

Both then entered Monte Cristo's chariot, which in the course of a few minutes deposited them at No. 30. Monte Cristo took Albert into his study, and pointing to a seat, placed another for himself. "Now let us talk the matter over calmly," said he.

"You see that I am quite calm," said Albert.

"With whom are you going to fight?"

"With Beauchamp."

"Is he one of your friends?"

"Of course; it is always with friends that one fights."

"I suppose you have some cause of quarrel?"

"I have!"

"What has he done to you?"

"There appeared in his journal last night—but wait, read for yourself." And Albert handed over the paper to the count, who read as follows:—

"A correspondent writes from Janina: 'A fact hitherto unknown, or at least not published, has come to our knowledge. The castle which formed the protection of the town was given up to the Turks by a French officer named Fernand, in whom the grand vizier, Ali Tebelin, had reposed the greatest confidence.'"

"Well!" said Monte Cristo; "what do you see in that to annoy you?"

"What do I see in it?"

"Yes; what does it signify to you if the castle of Janina was given up by a French officer?"

"It signifies that my father, the Comte de Morcerf, is Fernand by his baptismal name."

"Did your father serve Ali Pacha?"

"Yes; that is to say, he fought for the independence of the Greeks, and hence arises the calumny."

"Oh, my dear viscount, do talk reason!"

"I do not desire to do otherwise."

"Now, just tell me who the devil should know in France that the officer Fernand and the Comte de Morcerf are one and the same person; and who cares now about Janina, which was taken as long ago as the year 1822 or 1823?"

" That shows the blackness of the perfidy; they have allowed all this time to elapse, and then all of a sudden rake up events which have been forgotten, to furnish materials for scandal, in order to tarnish the lustre of our high position. I inherit my father's name, and I do not choose that the shadow of disgrace should darken it. I am going to Beauchamp, in whose journal this paragraph appears, and I shall insist on his retracting the assertion before two witnesses."

" Beauchamp will never retract."

" Then we will fight."

" No, you will not; for he will tell you, what is very true, that perhaps there were fifty officers in the Greek army who were named Fernand."

" We will fight, nevertheless. I will efface that blot on my father's character. My father, who was such a brave soldier, whose career was so brilliant—"

" Oh, well, he will add, ' We are warranted in believing that this Fernand is not the illustrious Comte de Morcerf, who also bears the same Christian name.' "

" I am determined not to be content with anything short of an entire retraction."

" And you intend to make him do it in the presence of two witnesses, do you? "

" Yes."

" You do wrong."

" Which means, I suppose, that you refuse the service which I asked of you? "

" You know my theory regarding duels; I told you my opinion on that subject, if you remember, when we were at Rome."

" Nevertheless, my dear count, I found you this morning engaged in an occupation but little consistent with the notions you profess to entertain."

" Because, my dear fellow, you understand one must never be eccentric. If one's lot is cast among fools, it is necessary to study folly. I shall perhaps find myself one day called out by some hare-brained scamp who has no more real cause of quarrel with me than you have with Beauchamp. He may take me to task for some foolish trifle or other; he will send me his seconds, or will insult me in some public place,—well, I shall have to kill that hot-headed fellow."

" You admit that you would fight, then? "

" Of course."

" Well, if so, why do you object to my fighting? "

"I do not say that you ought not to fight; I only say that a duel is a serious thing, and ought not to be undertaken without due reflection."

"Did he reflect before he insulted my father?"

"If he acted hastily, and owns that he did so, you ought to be satisfied."

"Ah, my dear count, you are far too indulgent."

"And you far too exacting. Supposing, for instance, and do not be angry at what I am going to say—"

"Well!"

"Supposing the assertion to be really true?"

"A son ought not to admit such a supposition against his father's honour."

"Eh! good heavens! we live in an age when one has to admit so many things!"

"That is precisely the fault of the age."

"And do you undertake to reform it?"

"Yes, as far as I am personally concerned."

"Well! you are indeed rigid, my dear fellow!"

"I know I am."

"Are you quite impervious to good advice?"

"Not when it comes from a friend."

"And do you accord me that title?"

"Certainly I do."

"Well, then, before going to Beauchamp with your witnesses, seek further information on the subject."

"From whom?"

"From Haydée, for example."

"Why, what can be the use of mixing a woman up in the affair; what can she do in it?"

"She can declare to you, for example, that your father had no hand whatever in the defeat and death of the vizier; or if by chance he had, indeed, the misfortune to—"

"I have already told you, my dear count, that I would not for one moment admit such a supposition."

"You reject this means of information, then?"

"I do, most decidedly."

"Then let me offer one more word of advice."

"Do so, then, but let it be the last."

"You do not wish to hear it, perhaps?"

"On the contrary, I request it."

"Do not take any witnesses with you when you go to Beauchamp; visit him alone."

"That would be contrary to all custom."

"Your case is not an ordinary one."

"And what is your reason for advising me to go alone?"

"Because then the affair will rest between you and Beauchamp."

"Explain yourself."

"I will do so. If Beauchamp be disposed to retract, you ought at least to give him the opportunity of doing it of his own free will,—the satisfaction to you will be the same; if on the contrary he refuses to do so, it will then be quite time enough to admit two strangers into your secret."

"They will not be strangers; they will be friends."

"Ah, but the friends of to-day are the enemies of to-morrow,—Beauchamp, for instance."

"So you recommend—"

"I recommend you to be prudent."

"Then you advise me to go alone to Beauchamp?"

"I do, and I will tell you why. When you wish to obtain some concession from a man's self-love, you must avoid even the appearance of wishing to wound it."

"I believe you are right."

"Ah! that is very fortunate."

"Then I will go alone."

"Go; but you would do better still by not going at all."

"That is impossible."

"Do so, then; it will be better, at any rate, than what you first proposed."

"But if in spite of all my precautions, I am at last obliged to fight, will you not be my second?"

"My dear viscount," said Monte Cristo, gravely, "you must have seen before to-day that at all times and in all places I have been at your disposal; but the service which you have just demanded of me is one which it is out of my power to render you."

"Why?"

"Perhaps you may know at some future period, and in the meantime, I ask your indulgence for my secret."

"Well, I will have Franz and Château-Renaud; they will be the very men for it."

"Do so, then."

"But if I do fight, you will surely not object to giving me a lesson or two in shooting and fencing?"

"That, too, is impossible."

"What a singular being you are!—you will not interfere in anything."

"You are right,—that is the principle on which I wish to act."

"We will say no more about it, then. Good-by, count."

Morcerf took his hat, and left the room. He found his chariot at the door, and doing his utmost to restrain his anger, he drove at once to Beauchamp's house. Beauchamp was in his office. It was one of those gloomy dusty-looking apartments, such as journalists' offices have always been from time immemorial. The servant announced M. Albert de Morcerf. Beauchamp made him repeat the name, and still hardly convinced, he called out, "Come in!" Albert entered. Beauchamp uttered an exclamation of surprise on seeing his friend leap over and trample under foot the newspapers which were strewed about the room. "Here! here! my dear Albert!" said he, holding out his hand to the young man. "What in the devil is the matter with you? Are you out of your senses, or do you come simply to take breakfast with me? Try to find a seat; there is one by that geranium, which is the only thing in the room to remind me that there are other leaves in the world besides leaves of paper."

"Beauchamp," said Albert, "it is of your journal that I come to speak."

"You, Morcerf? what do you wish to say about it?"

"I desire that a statement contained in it should be rectified."

"To what do you allude? But sit down."

"Thank you," said Albert, with a cold and formal bow.

"Will you now have the kindness to explain the nature of the statement which has displeased you?"

"An announcement has been made which touches the honour of a member of my family."

"What is it?" said Beauchamp, much surprised. "Surely you must be mistaken."

"The statement written to you from Janina."

"From Janina?"

"Yes; really you appear totally ignorant of the occasion which brings me here."

"Upon my honour! Baptiste, give me yesterday's paper," cried Beauchamp.

"Here, I have brought mine with me," replied Albert.

Beauchamp took the paper, and read in an undertone, "A correspondent writes from Janina," etc.

"You see it is a serious annoyance," said Morcerf, when Beauchamp had finished.

"Is the officer alluded to a relation of yours, then?" demanded the journalist.

"Yes," said Albert, blushing.

"Well, what do you wish me to do for you?" said Beauchamp, mildly.

"My dear Beauchamp, I wish you to contradict this statement."

Beauchamp looked at Albert with an expression full of kindness. "Come," said he, "this matter will want a good deal of talking over; a retraction is always a serious thing, you know. Sit down, and I will read it again."

Albert resumed his seat, and Beauchamp read, with more attention than at first, the lines denounced by his friend.

"Well," said Albert, in a determined tone, "you see that your paper has insulted a member of my family; and I insist on a retraction."

"You—insist?"

"Yes, I insist."

"Permit me to remind you that you are not parliamentary, my dear viscount."

"Nor do I wish to be," replied the young man, rising. "I repeat that I am determined to have the announcement of yesterday contradicted. You have known me long enough," continued Albert, with pressed lips, for he saw that Beauchamp raised his head disdainfully,—"you have been my friend, and are therefore sufficiently intimate with me to be aware that I am likely to maintain my resolution on this point."

"If I have been your friend, Morcerf, your present manner of speaking would almost lead me to forget that I ever bore that title. But wait a moment, do not let us get angry, or at least not yet. You are irritated and vexed; tell me how this Fernand is related to you?"

"He is my father," said Albert,—"M. Fernand Mondego, Comte de Morcerf, an old soldier, who has fought in twenty battles, and whose honourable scars they would cover with mud from the gutter."

"Is it your father?" said Beauchamp; "that is quite another thing. I can well understand your indignation, my dear Albert. I will read it again;" and he read the paragraph for the third time, weighing every word. "But the paper nowhere identifies this Fernand with your father."

"No; but the connection will be seen by others, and therefore I will have the statement contradicted."

At the words "I will," Beauchamp steadily raised his eyes

to Albert's countenance, and then as gradually lowering them, he remained thoughtful for a moment.

"You will retract this assertion, will you not, Beauchamp?" said Albert, with increased though stifled anger.

"Yes," replied Beauchamp.

"Immediately?" said Albert.

"When I am convinced that the statement is false."

"What?"

"The matter is worth investigating, and I will investigate it."

"But what is there to investigate, monsieur?" said Albert, enraged beyond measure. "If you do not believe that it is my father, say so immediately; if you believe it is he, state your reasons for doing so."

Beauchamp looked at Albert with the smile which was peculiar to him, and which in its numerous modifications served to express every varied feeling of his mind. "Monsieur," replied he, "if you came to me with the idea of demanding satisfaction, you should have gone at once to the point and not have entertained me with the idle conversation to which I have been patiently listening for the last half-hour. Am I to put this construction on your visit?"

"Yes, if you will not consent to retract that infamous calumny."

"Wait a moment; no threats, if you please, M. Fernand de Mondego, Vicomte de Morcerf! I never allow them from my enemies, and am less likely to put up with them from my friends. You insist on my contradicting the item relating to Colonel Fernand,—an item with which, I assure you on my word of honour, I have had nothing to do?"

"Yes, I insist on it!" said Albert, whose mind was beginning to get bewildered with the excitement of his feelings.

"And if I refuse to retract, you wish to fight, do you?" said Beauchamp, in a calm tone.

"Yes!" replied Albert, raising his voice.

"Well," said Beauchamp, "here is my answer, my dear monsieur. The statement was not inserted by me,—I was not even aware of it; but you have, by the step you have taken, called my attention to the paragraph in question, and it will remain until it shall be either contradicted or confirmed by sufficient authority."

"Monsieur," said Albert, rising, "I will do myself the honour of sending my seconds to you, and you will be kind enough to arrange with them the place of meeting and the arms which we are to use. Do you understand me?"

"Certainly, my dear monsieur."

"And this evening, if you please, or to-morrow at the latest, we will meet."

"No, no! I will be on the ground at the proper time; but in my opinion (and I have a right to dictate the preliminaries, as it is I who have received the provocation),—in my opinion the time has not yet come. I know you to be well skilled in the management of the sword, while I am only moderately so; I know too that you are a good marksman,—there we are about equal. I know that a duel between us two would be a serious affair, because you are brave, and I am brave also. I do not wish either to kill you, or to be killed myself, without a cause. Now, I am going to put a question to you, in my turn. Do you insist on this retraction so far as to kill me if I do not make it, although I have repeated more than once, and affirmed on my honour, that I was ignorant of the thing with which you charge me, and although I still declare that it is impossible for any one but you to recognise the Comte de Morcerf under the name of Fernand?"

"I maintain my original resolution."

"Very well, my dear monsieur; then I consent to cut throats with you. But I require three weeks' preparation; at the end of that time I shall come and say to you, 'The assertion is false, and I retract it,' or 'The assertion is true,' when I shall immediately draw the sword from its sheath, or the pistols from the case, whichever you please."

"Three weeks!" cried Albert; "they will be as three centuries while I suffer dishonour."

"Had you continued to be my friend, I should have said, 'Patience, my friend;' but you have constituted yourself my enemy, therefore I say, 'What does that signify to me, monsieur?'"

"Well, let it be three weeks, then," said Morcerf; "but remember, at the expiration of that time no further delay or subterfuge will enable you to avoid—"

"M. Albert de Morcerf," said Beauchamp, rising in his turn, "I cannot throw you out of the window for three weeks to come,—that is to say, for twenty-four days,—nor have you any right to split my skull open till that time has elapsed. To-day is the 29th of August; the 21st of September will therefore be the conclusion of the term agreed on, and till that time arrives —and it is the advice of a gentleman which I am about to give you—till then we will refrain from growling and barking like two dogs chained within sight of each other."

When he had concluded this speech, Beauchamp bowed coldly to Albert, turned his back upon him, and retired to his printing-office. Albert vented his anger on a pile of newspapers, which he sent flying all over the room by switching them violently with his stick; after which ebullition he departed,—not, however, without walking several times to the door of the printing-office, as if he had half a mind to enter it.

While Albert was lashing the front of his chariot as he had lashed the newspapers which were the innocent agents of his discomfiture, while crossing the boulevard, he perceived Morrel, who was walking with a quick step and a bright eye. He was passing the Chinese Baths, and appeared to have come from the direction of the Porte St. Martin, and to be going towards the Magdalen. "Ah," said Morcerf, "there goes a happy man!" And Albert was not mistaken in his opinion.

CHAPTER LXXIX

THE LEMONADE

Morrel was, in fact, very happy. M. Noirtier had just sent for him; and he was in such haste to know the reason of his doing so that he had not stopped to take a *fiacre*, placing more dependence on his own two legs than on the four legs of a cab-horse. He had therefore set off at a furious rate from the Rue Meslay, in the direction of the Faubourg St. Honoré. Morrel advanced at the pace of an athlete, and poor Barrois followed him as he best might. Morrel was thirty-one, Barrois was sixty years of age; Morrel was intoxicated with love, and Barrois was enfeebled by the great heat. These two men, thus divided in age and interests, resembled two sides of a triangle,—separated at the base they met at the apex. The apex was Noirtier, who had just sent for Morrel with the request that he would lose no time in coming to him,—a command which Morrel obeyed to the letter, to the great discomfiture of Barrois. On arriving at the house, Morrel was not even out of breath,—for love lends wings; but Barrois, who had long forgotten what it was to love, was covered with perspiration.

The old servant introduced Morrel by a private entrance, closed the door of the cabinet, and soon the rustling of a dress announced the arrival of Valentine. She was marvellously beautiful in her deep mourning dress, and Morrel experienced such delight in gazing upon her that he could almost have

dispensed with the conversation of her grandfather. But the easy-chair of the old man was heard rolling along the floor, and he soon made his appearance in the room. Noirtier acknowledged by a look of kindness the thanks which Morrel lavished on him for his timely intervention on behalf of Valentine and himself,—an intervention which had saved them from despair. Morrel then cast on the young girl an interrogative look as to the new favour which was accorded to him. Valentine was sitting at a little distance from them, timidly awaiting the moment when she should be obliged to speak. Noirtier fixed his eyes on her. "Am I to say what you told me?" asked Valentine. Noirtier in his turn looked at her.

"You wished me, then, to say what you have told me to?" she asked.

"Yes," intimated Noirtier.

"M. Morrel," said Valentine to the young man, who was regarding her with intense interest, "my grandfather, M. Noirtier, had a thousand things to say, which he told me three days ago; and now he has sent for you, that I may repeat them to you. I will repeat them, then; and since he has chosen me as his interpreter, I will be faithful to the trust, and will not alter a word of his intentions."

"Oh, I am listening with the greatest impatience," replied the young man: "speak, I beg of you!"

Valentine cast down her eyes; this was a good omen for Morrel, for he knew that nothing but happiness could have the power of thus overcoming Valentine. "My grandfather intends leaving this house," said she; "and Barrois is looking out suitable apartments for him in another."

"But you, mademoiselle," said Morrel,—"you who are so necessary to M. Noirtier's happiness—"

"I?" interrupted Valentine; "I shall not leave my grandfather, that is an understood thing between us. My apartment will be close to his. Now, M. de Villefort must give either his consent to this plan or his refusal. In the first case, I shall leave directly; and in the second, I shall await my majority, which will arrive in about ten months. Then I shall be free; I shall have an independent fortune, and—"

"And—?" demanded Morrel.

"And with my grandfather's consent I shall fulfil the promise which I have made you." Valentine pronounced these few last words in such a low tone that nothing but Morrel's intense interest in what she was saying could have enabled him to hear them.

"Have I not explained your wishes, grandpapa?" said Valentine, addressing Noirtier.

"Yes," signified the old man.

"Once under my grandfather's roof, M. Morrel can visit me in the presence of my good and worthy protector, if we still feel that the union we contemplated will be likely to insure our future comfort and happiness; in that case I shall expect M. Morrel to come and claim me at my own hands. But, alas! I have heard it said that hearts inflamed by obstacles to their desire grow cold in time of security."

"Oh!" cried Morrel, tempted to throw himself on his knees before Noirtier as before God, before Valentine as before an angel, "what have I ever done in my life to merit so much happiness?"

"Until that time," continued the young girl, in a calm and self-possessed tone of voice, "we will respect the proprieties, and be guided by the wishes of our friends, so long as those wishes do not tend finally to separate us; in one word, and I repeat it because it expresses everything,—we will wait."

"And I swear to make all the sacrifices which this word imposes, monsieur," said Morrel, "not only with resignation but with cheerfulness."

"Therefore," continued Valentine, looking playfully at Maximilian, "no more inconsiderate actions, no more rash projects; for you surely would not wish to compromise her who from this day regards herself as destined honourably and happily to bear your name?"

Morrel placed his hand upon his heart. Noirtier regarded the lovers with a look of ineffable tenderness, while Barrois, who had remained in the room in the character of a man priviledged to know everything that passed, smiled on the youthful couple as he wiped the perspiration from his bald forehead.

"How hot you look, my good Barrois!" observed Valentine.

"Ah! I have been running very fast, mademoiselle; but I must do M. Morrel the justice to say that he ran still faster."

Noirtier directed their attention to a tray, on which was placed a decanter containing lemonade, and a glass. The decanter was nearly full, lacking only a small quantity which had been already drunk by M. Noirtier.

"Come, Barrois," said the young girl, "take some of this lemonade; I see you are coveting a good draught of it."

"The fact is, mademoiselle," said Barrois, "I am dying with thirst; and since you are so kind as to offer it to me, I cannot say I should at all object to drinking your health in a glass of it."

"Take some, then, and come back immediately."

Barrois took away the tray, and hardly was he outside the door, which, in his haste, he forgot to shut, when they saw him throw back his head and empty the glass which Valentine had filled.

Valentine and Morrel were exchanging their adieux in the presence of Noirtier when a ring was heard at the doorbell. It was the signal of a visit. Valentine looked at her watch.

"It is past noon," said she, "and to-day is Saturday; I dare say it is the doctor, grandpapa."

Noirtier indicated his conviction that she was right in her supposition.

"He will come in here, and M. Morrel had better go; do you not think so, grandpapa?"

"Yes," signed the old man.

"Barrois!" cried Valentine, "Barrois!"

"I am coming, mademoiselle," replied he.

"Barrois will open the door for you," said Valentine, addressing Morrel. "And now remember one thing, Monsieur the Officer, that my grandfather commands you not to take any rash or ill-advised step which might compromise our happiness."

"I promised him to wait," replied Morrel; "and I will wait."

At this moment Barrois entered.

"Who rang?" asked Valentine.

"Dr. d'Avrigny," said Barrois, staggering as if he would fall.

"What is the matter, Barrois?" said Valentine.

The old man did not answer, but looked at his master with wild staring eyes, while his cramped hand he grasped a piece of furniture to enable him to stand upright.

"Why, he is going to fall!" cried Morrel.

The trembling which had attacked Barrois gradually increased, the features of the face became quite altered, and the convulsive movement of the muscles indicated the approach of a most serious nervous disorder. Noirtier, seeing Barrois in this pitiable condition, showed by his looks all the various emotions of sorrow and sympathy which can animate the heart of man. Barrois made some steps towards his master.

"Ah, my God! my God! what is the matter with me?" he said. "I suffer! I cannot see! A thousand fiery darts are piercing my brain! Oh, don't touch me, don't touch me!"

By this time his eyes had become haggard and protruding; his head fell back, and the rest of the body began to stiffen.

Valentine uttered a cry of horror; Morrel took her in his arms,

as if to defend her from some unknown danger. "M. d'Avrigny! M. d'Avrigny!" cried she, in a stifled voice. "Help! help!"

Barrois turned round, and with a great effort stumbled a few steps, then fell at the feet of Noirtier, and resting his hand on the knee of the invalid, exclaimed, "My master! my good master!"

At this moment M. de Villefort, attracted by the noise, appeared on the threshold. Morrel relaxed his hold of Valentine, almost fainting, and retreating to a distant corner of the room, he remained half hidden behind a curtain. Pale as if he had seen a serpent spring up before him, he fixed his astonished gaze on the unhappy sufferer.

Noirtier, burning with impatience and terror, was in despair at his utter inability to help his old domestic, whom he regarded more in the light of a friend than a servant. One might trace the terrible conflict which was going on between the living, energetic mind and the inanimate and helpless body, by the fearful swelling of the veins of his forehead and the contraction of the muscles around the eye. Barrois, his features convulsed, his eyes suffused with blood, and his head thrown back, was lying at full length, beating the floor with his hands, while his legs were become so stiff that they looked as if they would break rather than bend. A slight appearance of foam was visible round the mouth, and he breathed painfully.

Villefort, stupefied, remained a moment gazing intently on the scene before him. He had not seen Morrel. After a moment of dumb contemplation, during which his face became pale, and his hair seemed to stand on end, he sprang towards the door, crying out, "Doctor! doctor! come! come!"

"Madame! madame!" cried Valentine, calling her stepmother, and running upstairs to meet her; "come quick, quick! and bring your bottle of smelling-salts with you."

"What is the matter?" said Madame de Villefort, in a hard and constrained tone.

"Oh! come! come!"

"But where is the doctor?" exclaimed Villefort; "where is he?"

Madame de Villefort now deliberately descended the staircase. In one hand she held her handkerchief, with which she appeared to be wiping her face, and in the other a bottle of English smelling-salts. Her first look on entering the room was at Noirtier, whose face, independently of the emotion which such a scene could not fail of producing, proclaimed him to be in possession of his usual health; her second glance was

at the dying man. She turned pale, and her glance rebounded, so to speak, from the servant to the master.

"In the name of Heaven, madame," said Villefort, "where is the doctor? He was with you just now. You see this is a fit of apoplexy, and he might be saved if he could but be bled!"

"Has he eaten anything lately?" asked Madame de Villefort, evading the question.

"Madame," replied Valentine, "he has not even breakfasted. He has been running very fast on an errand with which my grandfather charged him, and when he returned he took nothing but a glass of lemonade."

"Ah!" said Madame de Villefort; "why did he not take wine? Lemonade was a very bad thing for him."

"Grandpapa's bottle of lemonade was standing just by his side; poor Barrois was very thirsty, and was thankful to drink anything he could find."

Madame de Villefort started. Noirtier looked at her with a glance of searching scrutiny. "He has such a short neck," said she.

"Madame," said M. de Villefort, "I ask where is M. d'Avrigny? In God's name, answer me!"

"He is with Edouard, who is not quite well," replied Madame de Villefort, no longer able to avoid answering.

Villefort rushed upstairs to summon him himself.

"Take this," said Madame de Villefort, giving her smelling-bottle to Valentine. "They will, no doubt, bleed him; therefore I will retire, for I cannot endure the sight of blood;" and she followed her husband upstairs.

Morrel now emerged from his hiding-place, where he had remained quite unperceived, so great had been the general confusion.

"Go away as quick as you can, Maximilian," said Valentine, "and stay till I send for you. Go."

Morrel looked towards Noirtier for permission to retire. The old man, who had preserved all his self-possession, made a sign to him to do so. The young man pressed Valentine's hand to his lips, and then left the house by a back staircase. At the same moment that he quitted the room Villefort and the doctor came in by an opposite entrance. Barrois was now showing signs of returning consciousness; the crisis seemed past; a low moaning was heard, and he raised himself on one knee. D'Avrigny and Villefort laid him on a couch.

"What do you prescribe, doctor?" demanded Villefort.

"Give me some water and ether. You have some in the house, have you not?"

"Yes."

"Send for some oil of turpentine and tartar emetic."

Villefort immediately despatched a messenger.

"And now let every one retire."

"Must I go too?" asked Valentine, timidly.

"Yes, mademoiselle, you especially," replied the doctor, abruptly.

Valentine looked at M. d'Avrigny with astonishment, kissed her grandfather on the forehead, and left the room. The doctor closed the door after her with a gloomy air.

"Look! look! doctor," said Villefort, "he is coming round again; after all, it is nothing of consequence."

M. d'Avrigny answered by a melancholy smile. "How do you find yourself, Barrois?" asked he.

"A little better, monsieur."

"Will you drink some of this ether and water?"

"I will try; but don't touch me."

"Why not?"

"Because I feel that if you were only to touch me with the tip of your finger the fit would return."

"Drink."

Barrois took the glass, and raising it to his purple lips, took about half of the liquid offered him.

"Where do you suffer?" asked the doctor.

"Everywhere; I feel cramp over my whole body."

"Do you find any dazzling sensation before the eyes?"

"Yes."

"Any noise in the ears?"

"Frightful."

"When did you first feel that?"

"Just now."

"Suddenly?"

"Yes, like a clap of thunder."

"Did you feel nothing of it yesterday or the day before?"

"Nothing."

"No drowsiness?"

"None."

"What have you eaten to-day?"

"I have eaten nothing; I only drank a glass of my master's lemonade;" and Barrois turned towards Noirtier, who, immovably fixed in his arm-chair, was contemplating this terrible scene without allowing a word or a movement to escape him.

"Where is this lemonade?" asked the doctor, eagerly.

"Downstairs in the decanter."

"Whereabouts downstairs?"

"In the kitchen."

"Shall I go and fetch it, doctor?" inquired Villefort.

"No, stay here, and try to make Barrois drink the rest of this glass of ether and water. I will go myself and fetch the lemonade."

D'Avrigny bounded towards the door, flew down the back staircase, and almost knocked down Madame de Villefort in his haste, who was herself going down to the kitchen. She uttered a cry; D'Avrigny paid no attention to her. Possessed with but one idea, he cleared the last four steps with a bound, and rushed into the kitchen, where he saw the decanter about three parts empty still standing on the tray where it had been left. He darted upon it as an eagle would seize upon its prey. Panting with loss of breath, he returned to the room he had just left. Madame de Villefort was slowly ascending the steps which led to her room.

"Is this the decanter you spoke of?" asked D'Avrigny.

"Yes, doctor."

"Is this the same lemonade of which you partook?"

"I believe so."

"What did it taste like?"

"It had a bitter taste."

The doctor poured some drops of the lemonade into the palm of his hand, put his lips to it, and after having rinsed his mouth as a man does when he is tasting wine, he spit the liquor into the fireplace.

"It is no doubt the same," said he; "did you drink some too, M. Noirtier?"

"Yes."

"And did you also discover a bitter taste?"

"Yes."

"Oh, doctor!" cried Barrois, "the fit is coming on again! My God! Lord, have pity on me!"

The doctor flew to his patient. "That emetic, Villefort; see if it is coming."

Villefort sprang into the passage, exclaiming, "The emetic! the emetic! is it come yet?"

No one answered. The most profound terror reigned throughout the house.

"If I had anything by means of which I could inflate the lungs," said D'Avrigny, looking around him, "perhaps I might

prevent suffocation. But there is nothing which would do!—nothing!"

"Oh, monsieur," cried Barrois, "are you going to let me die without help? Oh, I am dying! My God! I am dying!"

"A quill! a quill!" said the doctor. There was one lying on the table; he endeavoured to introduce it into the mouth of the patient, who in the midst of his convulsions was making vain attempts to vomit; but the jaws were so clinched that the quill could not pass them. This second attack was much more violent than the first, and he had slipped from the couch to the ground, where he was writhing in agony. The doctor left him in this paroxysm, knowing that he could do nothing to alleviate it, and going up to Noirtier, said abruptly, in a low voice, "How do you find yourself? well?"

"Yes."

"Have you any weight on the chest, or does your stomach feel light and comfortable, eh?"

"Yes."

"Then you feel pretty much as you generally do after you have had the dose which I am accustomed to give you every Sunday?"

"Yes."

"Did Barrois make your lemonade?"

"Yes."

"Was it you who asked him to drink some of it?"

"No."

"Was it M. de Villefort?"

"No."

"Madame?"

"No."

"It was your granddaughter, then, was it not?"

"Yes."

A groan from Barrois, accompanied by a yawn which seemed to crack the very jawbones, attracted the attention of M. d'Avrigny; he left M. Noirtier and returned to the sick man. "Barrois," said he, "can you speak?" Barrois muttered a few unintelligible words. "Try and make an effort to do so, my good man," said D'Avrigny. Barrois reopened his bloodshot eyes.

"Who made the lemonade?"

"I did."

"Did you bring it to your master as soon as it was made?"

"No."

"You left it somewhere, then, in the meantime?"

"Yes; I left it in the pantry because I was called away."

"Who brought it into this room, then?"

"Mademoiselle Valentine."

D'Avrigny struck his forehead with his hand. "Gracious Heaven!" he murmured.

"Doctor! Doctor!" cried Barrois, who felt another fit coming.

"Will they never bring that emetic?" asked the doctor.

"Here is a glass with one already prepared," said Villefort, entering the room.

"Who prepared it?"

"The chemist who came here with me."

"Drink it," said the doctor to Barrois.

"Impossible, doctor; it is too late. My throat is closing up! I am choking! Oh, my heart! Oh, my head! Oh, what agony! Shall I suffer like this long?"

"No, no, friend," replied the doctor, "you will soon cease to suffer."

"Ah, I understand you," said the unhappy man. "My God, have mercy upon me!" and uttering a fearful cry, Barrois fell back as if he had been struck by lightning. D'Avrigny put his hand to his heart, and placed a glass before his lips.

"Well?" said Villefort.

"Go to the kitchen and get me some syrup of violets."

Villefort went immediately.

"Do not be alarmed, M. Noirtier," said D'Avrigny; "I am going to take my patient into the next room to bleed him; this sort of attack is very frightful to witness."

And taking Barrois under his arms, he dragged him into an adjoining room; but almost immediately he returned for the remainder of the lemonade. Noirtier closed his right eye. "You want Valentine, do you not? I will tell them to send her to you."

Villefort returned, and D'Avrigny met him in the passage. "Well! how is he now?" asked he.

"Come in here," said D'Avrigny; and he took him into the chamber where Barrois lay.

"Is he still in a fit?" said the *procureur du roi.*

"He is dead."

Villefort drew back a few steps, and clasping his hands, exclaimed with unfeigned commiseration, "Dead! and so suddenly!"

"Yes, it is very sudden, is it not?" said the doctor. "But that ought not to astonish you; Monsieur and Madame de

Saint-Méran died as suddenly. People die very suddenly in your house, M. de Villefort."

"What!" cried the magistrate, with an accent of horror and consternation, "you return to that terrible idea?"

"Always, monsieur, always," said D'Avrigny, with solemnity, "for it has never for one instant ceased to retain possession of my mind; and that you may be quite sure I am not mistaken this time, listen well to what I am going to say, M. de Villefort." The magistrate trembled convulsively. "There is a poison which destroys life almost without leaving any perceptible traces. I know it well; I have studied it in all its qualities and in the effects which it produces. I recognised the presence of this poison in the case of poor Barrois as well as in that of Madame de Saint-Méran. There is a way of detecting its presence. It restores the blue colour of litmus-paper reddened by an acid, and it turns syrup of violets green. We have no litmus-paper, but, hark! here they come with the syrup of violets."

The doctor was right; steps were heard in the passage. M. d'Avrigny opened the door and took from the hands of the *femme de chambre* a cup which contained two or three spoonfuls of the syrup; he then carefully closed the door. "Look!" said he to the *procureur du roi*, whose heart beat so loudly that it might almost be heard; "here is in this cup some syrup of violets, and this decanter contains the remainder of the lemonade of which M. Noirtier and Barrois partook. If the lemonade be pure and inoffensive, this syrup will keep its colour; if on the contrary the lemonade be drugged with poison, the syrup will become green. Look!"

The doctor then slowly poured some drops of the lemonade from the decanter into the cup, and immediately a light, cloudy sediment began to form at the bottom of the cup; this sediment first took a blue shade, then from the colour of sapphire it passed to that of opal, and from opal to emerald. Arrived at this last hue, it changed no more. The result of the experiment left no room for doubt.

"The unfortunate Barrois has been poisoned by false angustura and Ignatius beans;" said D'Avrigny; "and I will maintain this assertion before God and man."

Villefort said nothing, but he clasped his hands, opened his haggard eyes, and overcome with his emotion sank into a chair.

CHAPTER LXXX

THE ACCUSATION

M. d'Avrigny soon restored the magistrate to consciousness, who had looked like a second corpse in that chamber of death.

"Oh, death is in my house!" cried Villefort.

"Say rather, crime!" replied the doctor.

"M. d'Avrigny," cried Villefort, "I cannot tell you all I feel at this moment,—terror, grief, madness."

"Yes," said M. d'Avrigny, with an imposing calmness; "but I think it is now time to act. I think it is time to stop this torrent of mortality. I can no longer bear to be in possession of these secrets without the hope of seeing the victims and society revenged."

Villefort cast a gloomy look round him. "In my house!" murmured he; "in my house!"

"Come, magistrate," said M. d'Avrigny, "show yourself a man; as an interpreter of the law, do honour to your profession by sacrificing to it your selfish interests."

"You make me shudder, doctor! Do you talk of a sacrifice?"

"I do."

"Do you then suspect any one?"

"I suspect no one. Death raps at your door; it enters; it goes, not blindfolded, but circumspectly, from room to room. Well! I follow its course, I track its passage; I adopt the wisdom of the ancients, and feel my way, for my friendship for your family and my respect for you are as a twofold bandage over my eyes; well—"

"Oh! speak, speak, doctor; I shall have courage."

"Well, sir, you have in your establishment, in your family perhaps, one of those frightful phenomena of which each century produces one example. Locusta and Agrippina, living at the same time, are an exception, which proves the determination of Providence to effect the entire ruin of the Roman empire, sullied by so many crimes. Brunehalt and Frédégonde are the results of the painful struggle of civilisation in its infancy, when man was learning to control mind, were it even by an emissary from the realms of darkness. All these women had been, or were, beautiful. The same flower of innocence had flourished, or was still flourishing on their brows, that is seen on the brow of the culprit in your house."

Villefort cried out, clasped his hands, and looked at the doctor

with a supplicating air. But the latter pursued without pity.

"'Seek whom the crime will profit,' says an axiom of jurisprudence."

"Doctor," cried Villefort, "alas, doctor! how often has man's justice been deceived by those fatal words! I know not why, but I feel that this crime—"

"You acknowledge, then, the existence of the crime?"

"Yes, I see too plainly that it does exist. But I believe that it is aimed at me alone, and not at those who have perished. I apprehend an attack upon myself after all these strange disasters."

"Oh, man!" murmured D'Avrigny, "the most egotistic of all animals, the most selfish of all creatures, who believes the earth turns, the sun shines, and death strikes for him alone,—an ant cursing God from the top of a blade of grass! And have those who have lost their lives lost nothing?—M. de Saint-Méran, Madame de Saint-Méran, M. Noirtier—"

"How! M. Noirtier?"

"Yes; do you think that harm was intended to that poor servant? No, no; like Shakespeare's Polonius, he died for another. It was Noirtier the lemonade was intended for; it is Noirtier, logically speaking, who drank it. The other drank it only by accident; and although Barrois is dead, it was Noirtier whose death was intended."

"But why did it not kill my father?"

"I told you why one evening in the garden, after Madame de Saint-Méran's death,—because his system is accustomed to that very poison; because the dose was trifling for him which would be fatal for another; because no one knows, not even the assassin, that for the last twelve months I have given M. Noirtier brucine for his paralytic affection; while the assassin is not ignorant—and he has assured himself of it by experience—that brucine is a violent poison."

"My God! my God!" murmured Villefort, wringing his hands.

"Follow the culprit's steps; he first kills M. de Saint-Méran—"

"Oh, doctor!"

"I would swear to it; what I heard of his symptoms agrees too well with what I have seen in the other cases." Villefort ceased to contend, and groaned. "He first kills M. de Saint-Méran," repeated the doctor, "then Madame de Saint-Méran,—a double fortune to inherit." Villefort wiped the perspiration from his forehead. "Listen attentively."

"Alas!" stammered Villefort, "I do not lose a single word."

"M. Noirtier," resumed M. d'Avrigny, in the same pitiless tone,—"M. Noirtier had once made a will against you, against your family,—in favour of the poor, in fact; M. Noirtier is spared, because nothing is expected from him. But he has no sooner destroyed his first will and made a second than for fear he should make a third, he is struck down; the will was made the day before yesterday, I believe. You see there has been no time lost."

"Oh, mercy, M. d'Avrigny!"

"No mercy, monsieur! The physician has a sacred mission on earth; and to fulfil it he begins at the source of life and goes down to the mysterious shades of death. When crime has been committed, and God, doubtless in anger, turns away his face, it is for the physician to bring the culprit to justice."

"Have mercy on my child, monsieur!" murmured Villefort.

"You see it is yourself who have first named her,—you, her father."

"Have pity on Valentine! Listen! it is impossible. I would as willingly accuse myself! Valentine! a heart of diamond, a lily of innocence!"

"No pity, M. le Procureur du roi; the crime is flagrant. Mademoiselle herself packed all the medicines that were sent to M. de Saint-Méran; and M. de Saint-Méran is dead. Mademoiselle de Villefort prepared all the cooling draughts which Madame de Saint-Méran took; and Madame de Saint-Méran is dead. Mademoiselle de Villefort took from the hands of Barrois, who was sent out, the lemonade which M. Noirtier is accustomed to drink every morning; and he has escaped only by a miracle. Mademoiselle de Villefort is the culprit! she is the poisoner! M. le Procureur du roi, I denounce Mademoiselle de Villefort; do your duty."

"Doctor, I resist no longer; I can no longer defend myself. I believe you; but for pity's sake, spare my life, my honour!"

"M. de Villefort," replied the doctor, with increased vehemence, "there are occasions when I dispense with all foolish human circumspection. If your daughter had committed only one crime, and I saw her meditating another, I would say, 'Warn her, punish her, let her pass the remainder of her life in a convent weeping and praying.' If she had committed two crimes, I would say, 'Here, M. de Villefort, is a poison that the prisoner is not acquainted with,—one that has no known antidote, quick as thought, rapid as lightning, mortal as the thunderbolt. Give her that poison, recommending her soul to

God, and save your honour and your life, for it is yours she aims at; and I can picture her approaching your pillow with her hypocritical smiles and her sweet exhortations. Woe to you, M. de Villefort, if you do not strike first!' This is what I would say had she only killed two persons; but she has seen three deaths, has contemplated three murdered persons, has knelt by three corpses! To the scaffold with the poisoner! To the scaffold! Do you talk of your honour? Do what I tell you, and immortality awaits you!"

Villefort fell on his knees. "Listen," said he; "I have not the strength of mind that you have, or rather that which you would not have, if instead of my daughter Valentine your daughter Madeleine were concerned." The doctor turned pale. "Doctor, every son of woman is born to suffer and to die; I am content to suffer and to await death."

"Beware!" said M. d'Avrigny; "it may come slowly. You will see it approach after having struck your father, your wife, perhaps your son."

Villefort, suffocating, pressed the doctor's arm. "Listen!" cried he; "pity me; help me! No, my daughter is not guilty. If you drag us both before a tribunal I will still say, 'No, my daughter is not guilty; there is no crime in my house. I will not acknowledge a crime in my house; for when crime enters a dwelling, it is like death,—it does not come alone.' Listen! What does it signify to you if I am murdered? Are you my friend? Are you a man? Have you a heart? No, you are a physician! Well, I tell you I will not drag my daughter before a tribunal and give her up to the executioner! The bare idea would kill me,—would drive me like a madman to dig my heart out with my finger-nails. And if you were mistaken, doctor!—if it were not my daughter! If I should come one day, pale as a spectre, and say to you, 'Assassin! you have killed my child!' Hold! if that should happen, although I am a Christian, M. d'Avrigny, I should kill myself."

"Well," said the doctor, after a moment's silence, "I will wait." Villefort looked at him as if he did not understand his words. "Only," continued M. d'Avrigny, with a slow and solemn tone, "if any one falls ill in your house, if you feel yourself attacked, do not send for me, for I will come no more. I will consent to share this dreadful secret with you; but I will not allow shame and remorse to grow and increase in my conscience, as crime and misery will in your house."

"Then you abandon me, doctor?"

"Yes, for I can follow you no farther; and I only stop at

the foot of the scaffold. Some further discovery will be made which will bring this dreadful tragedy to a close. Adieu."

"I entreat you, doctor!"

"All the horrors that disturb my thoughts make your house odious and fatal. Adieu, monsieur."

"One word,—one single word more, doctor. You go leaving me in all the horror of my situation, after increasing it by what you have revealed to me. But what will be reported of the sudden death of this poor old servant?"

"True," said M. d'Avrigny; "we will return."

The doctor went out first, followed by M. de Villefort; the terrified servants were on the stairs and in the passage where the doctor would pass. "Monsieur," said D'Avrigny to Villefort, so loud that all might hear, "poor Barrois has led too sedentary a life of late; accustomed formerly to ride with his master on horseback or in a carriage to the four corners of Europe, the monotonous service near that arm-chair has killed him. His blood has thickened; he was stout; he had a short, thick neck; he was attacked with apoplexy, and I was called in too late. By the way," added he, in a low tone, "take care to throw that cup of syrup of violets into the ashes."

The doctor, without shaking hands with Villefort, without adding a word to what he had said, went out amid the tears and lamentations of the whole household. The same evening all Villefort's servants, who had assembled in the kitchen and had a long consultation, came to tell Madame de Villefort that they wished to leave. No entreaty, no proposition of increased wages, could induce them to remain; to every argument they replied, "We must go, for death is in this house." They all left in spite of prayers and entreaties, testifying their regret at leaving so good a master and mistress, and especially Mademoiselle Valentine, so good, so kind, and so gentle. Villefort looked at Valentine as they said this. She was in tears. Then a strange thing happened; in spite of the emotions he felt at the sight of these tears, he looked also at Madame de Villefort, and it appeared to him that a slight sinister smile had passed over her thin lips, like those meteors which are seen passing ominously between two clouds in a stormy sky.

CHAPTER LXXXI

THE ROOM OF THE RETIRED BAKER

On the evening of the day on which the Comte de Morcerf had left Danglars's house with feelings of shame and anger caused by the banker's cold demeanour, M. Andrea Cavalcanti, with curled hair, mustaches in perfect order, and white gloves which fitted admirably, had entered the courtyard of the banker's house in the Chaussée d'Antin. He had not been more than ten minutes in the drawing-room before he drew Danglars aside into the recess of a bow-window, and after an ingenious preamble related to him all his anxieties and cares since his noble father's departure. He acknowledged the extreme kindness which had been shown him by the banker's family, in which he had been received as a son, and where, besides, his warmest affections had found an object on which to centre in Mademoiselle Danglars. Danglars listened with the most profound attention; he had expected this declaration the last two or three days; and when at last it came, his eyes glistened as much as they had lowered on listening to Morcerf. He would not however yield immediately to the young man's request, but made a few conscientious scruples. "Are you not rather young, M. Andrea, to think of marrying?"

"No, indeed, monsieur," replied M. Cavalcanti; "in Italy the nobility generally marry young. It is a reasonable custom. Life is so uncertain, we ought to secure happiness while it is within our reach."

"Well, monsieur," said Danglars, "in case your proposals, which do me honour, are accepted by my wife and daughter, by whom shall the preliminary arrangements be settled? So important a negotiation should, I think, be conducted by the respective fathers of the young people."

"Monsieur, my father is a man of great foresight and prudence. Imagining that I might wish to settle in France, he left me at his departure, together with the papers proving my identity, a letter promising, if he approved of my choice, one hundred and fifty thousand livres per annum from the day of my marriage. It is, as I estimate it, a quarter of my father's revenue."

"I," said Danglars, "have always intended giving my daughter five hundred thousand livres as her dowry; she is, besides, my sole heiress."

"Well," said Andrea, "you see the arrangement would be a good one,—supposing that my suit is not dismissed by Madame

la Baronne Danglars, and by Mademoiselle Eugénie. We should command an annuity of one hundred and seventy-five thousand livres. Supposing, also, I should persuade the marquis to give me my capital,—which is not likely, but still is possible,—we would place with you these two or three millions; and two or three millions in skilful hands can always be made to yield ten per cent."

"I never give more than four per cent. and generally only three and a half; but to my son-in-law I would give five, and we would share the profit."

"Very good, father-in-law," said Cavalcanti, yielding to his low-born nature, which would escape sometimes through the aristocratic gloss with which he sought to conceal it. Correcting himself immediately, he said, "Excuse me, monsieur. You see hope alone makes me almost mad; what will not the reality do?"

"But," said Danglars, who on his part did not perceive how readily the conversation, at first disinterested, was changing into a business negotiation, "there is doubtless a part of your fortune your father could not refuse you?"

"Which?" asked the young man.

"What you inherit from your mother."

"Yes, indeed,—that which comes from my mother, Leonora Corsinari."

"How much may it amount to?"

"Upon my word, monsieur," said Andrea, "I assure you I have never given the subject a thought; but I suppose it must be at least two millions."

Danglars felt as much overcome with joy as the miser who finds a lost treasure, or as the shipwrecked mariner who feels himself on the solid ground instead of in the abyss in which he was on the point of perishing.

"Well, monsieur," said Andrea, bowing to the banker respectfully, "may I hope?"

"M. Andrea," said Danglars, "you may not only hope, but consider it a settled thing, if no obstacle arises on your part. But," he added thoughtfully, "how is it that your patron, M. de Monte Cristo, did not make this proposal for you?"

Andrea blushed imperceptibly. "I have just left the count, monsieur," said he; "he is doubtless a delightful man, but inconceivably singular in his ideas. He esteems me highly; he even told me that he had not the slightest doubt that my father would give me the capital instead of the income. He has promised to use his influence to obtain it for me; but he also

declared that he never had taken on himself the responsibility of making proposals for another, and he never would. But—I must do him that justice—he condescended to add that if ever he had regretted the repugnance he felt to such a step, it was on this occasion, because he thought the projected union would be a happy and suitable one. Besides, if he will do nothing officially, he will, he told me, answer any questions you propose to him."

"Ah! very good!"

"And now," said Andrea, with one of his most charming smiles, "having finished talking to the father-in-law, I must address myself to the banker."

"And what may you have to say to him?" said Danglars, smiling in his turn.

"That the day after to-morrow I shall have to draw upon you for about four thousand livres; but the count, expecting that my bachelor's revenue would not suffice for the coming month's outlay, has offered me a draft for twenty thousand livres. It bears his signature, as you see; will you take it?"

"Bring me one like that for a million," said Danglars, "I shall be well pleased,"—putting the draft in his pocket. "Fix your own hour for to-morrow, and my cashier shall call on you with a check for twenty-four thousand livres."

"At ten o'clock then, if you please; I should like it early, as I am going into the country to-morrow."

"Very well, at ten o'clock; you are still at the Hôtel des Princes?"

"Yes."

The following morning, with a promptness which did credit to the banker's punctuality, the twenty-four thousand livres were placed in the young man's hands as he was on the point of starting, who then went out, leaving two hundred livres for Caderousse. He went out chiefly to avoid this dangerous enemy, and returned as late as possible in the evening. But scarcely had he stepped out of his carriage, when the porter met him with a parcel in his hand. "Monsieur," said he, "the man has been here."

"What man?" said Andrea, carelessly, apparently forgetting him whom he but too well recollected.

"He to whom your excellency pays that little annuity."

"Oh!" said Andrea, "my father's old servant. Well, you gave him the two hundred livres I had left for him?"

"Yes, your excellency." Andrea had expressed a wish to

be thus addressed. "But," continued the porter, "he would not take them."

Andrea turned pale; but as it was dark, no one noticed his paleness. "What! he would not take them?" said he, with a slightly agitated voice.

"No, he wished to speak to your excellency; I told him you had gone out. He insisted, but finally appeared to be convinced, and gave me this letter, which he had brought with him already sealed."

"Give it me," said Andrea; and he read by the light of his carriage-lamp,—

"You know where I live; I expect you to-morrow morning at nine o'clock."

Andrea examined it carefully, to ascertain if the letter had been opened, or if any indiscreet eyes had seen its contents; but it was so carefully folded, in order to read it one must break the seal, and the seal was intact. "Very well," said he. "Poor man! he is a worthy creature." He left the porter pondering on these words, not knowing which most to admire, the master or the servant. "Take out the horses quickly, and come up to me," said Andrea to his groom. In two bounds the young man had reached his room, and he immediately burned Caderousse's letter. The servant entered just as he had finished. "You are of about my height, Pierre," said he.

"I have that honour, your excellency."

"You had a new livery yesterday?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"I have an engagement with a pretty little girl for this evening, and do not wish to be known; lend me your livery and bring me your credentials, so that I may be able to sleep at an inn, if I should find it desirable." Pierre obeyed. Five minutes after, Andrea left the hotel, completely disguised, took a cabriolet, and ordered the driver to take him to the Cheval Rouge, at Picpus. The next morning he left that inn as he had left the Hôtel des Princes, without being noticed, walked down the Faubourg St. Antoine, along the boulevard to Rue Ménilmontant, and stopping at the door of the third house on the left, looked for some one of whom to make inquiry in the porter's absence.

"For whom are you looking, my fine fellow?" asked the apple-woman on the opposite side.

"M. Pailletin, if you please, my good woman," replied Andrea.

"A retired baker?" asked the apple-woman.

"Exactly."

"He lives at the end of the yard, on the left, on the third floor."

Andrea went as directed; and on the third floor he found a hare's paw, which, by the hasty ringing of the bell, it was evident he pulled with considerable ill-temper. A moment after, Caderousse's face appeared at the grating in the door. "Ah, you are punctual," said he, as he unbolted the door.

"*Parbleu!*" said Andrea, entering; and he threw down before him his livery-cap, which, missing the chair, rolled round the chamber on its outer edge.

"Come, come, my little fellow, don't be angry. See, I have thought about you; look at the good breakfast we are going to have,—nothing but what you are fond of."

Andrea indeed inhaled the scent of something cooking, which was not unwelcome to him, hungry as he was. It was that mixture of fat and garlic peculiar to provincial kitchens of an inferior order; there was, besides, an odour of broiled fish, and above all, the pungent smell of musk and cloves. These odours escaped from two covered dishes placed on two furnaces, and from a stewpan which sizzled in the oven of an iron stove. In an adjoining room Andrea saw also a tolerably clean table prepared for two, two bottles of wine, sealed, the one with green, the other with yellow, a considerable quantity of brandy in a decanter, and a medley of fruits in a cabbage-leaf, cleverly arranged on an earthenware plate.

"What do you think of it, my little fellow?" said Caderousse. "Ay, that smells good! you know I was a good cook down there; do you recollect how you used to lick your fingers? You were among the first who tasted any of my dishes, and I think you relished them tolerably." While speaking, Caderousse went on peeling a fresh supply of onions.

"But," said Andrea, ill-temperedly, "*pardieu!* if it was only to breakfast with you that you disturbed me, the devil take you!"

"My boy," said Caderousse, sententiously, "one can talk while eating. And then, ingrate! you are not pleased to see an old friend? For my part, I weep with joy."

He was indeed really crying, but it would have been difficult to say whether joy or the onions produced the greatest effect on the lachrymal gland of the old innkeeper of the Pont du Gard.

"Hold your tongue, hypocrite!" said Andrea; "you love me,—you!"

"Yes, I do, or may the devil take me! I know it is a weakness," said Caderousse, "but it overpowers me."

"And yet it has not prevented your sending for me to play me some trick."

"Come!" said Caderousse, wiping his large knife on his apron, "if I did not like you, do you think I should endure the wretched life you lead me? Think for a moment. You have your servant's clothes on,—you therefore keep a servant; I have none, and am obliged to cook my own meals. You abuse my cookery because you dine at the *table d'hôte* of the Hôtel des Princes, or the Café de Paris. Well, I too could keep a servant, I too could have a tilbury, I too could dine where I like; but why do I not? Because I would not annoy my little Benedetto. Come! just acknowledge that I could, eh!" This address was accompanied by a look which was by no means difficult to understand.

"Well!" said Andrea, "admitting your love, why do you want me to breakfast with you?"

"That I may have the pleasure of seeing you, my little fellow."

"What is the use of seeing me after we have made all our arrangements?"

"Eh! dear friend," said Caderousse, "are wills ever made without codicils? But you have come to take breakfast, in the first place, have you not? Well, sit down, and let us begin with these pilchards, and this fresh butter which I have put on some vine-leaves to please you, you rascal. Ah, yes! you look at my room, my four straw chairs, my images at three livres each. But what do you expect? this is not the Hôtel des Princes."

"Come! you are growing discontented, you are no longer happy,—you who aspired only to maintain the appearance of a retired baker." Caderousse sighed. "Well! what have you to say? You have seen your dream realised."

"I can still say it is a dream. A retired baker, my poor Benedetto, is rich; he has an annuity."

"Well, you have an annuity."

"I have?"

"Yes, since I bring you your two hundred livres."

Caderousse shrugged his shoulders. "It is humiliating," said he, "thus to receive money given grudgingly; an uncertain supply which may soon fail. You see I am obliged to economise in case your prosperity should cease. Well, my friend, fortune is inconstant, as said the chaplain of the —— regiment. I know your prosperity is great, you scoundrel; you are to marry the daughter of Danglars."

"What! of Danglars?"

"Yes, to be sure! Must I say Baron Danglars? I might as well say Comte Benedetto. He was an old friend of mine; and if he had not so bad a memory he ought to invite me to your wedding, seeing he came to mine. Yes, yes, to mine, forsooth! He was not so proud then; he was an under-clerk to the good M. Morrel. I have dined many times with him and the Comte de Morcerf; so you see I have some high connections, and were I to cultivate them a little we might meet in the same drawing-rooms."

"Come, now, your jealousy makes you see rainbows, Caderousse."

"That is all very fine, my Benedetto, but I know what I am saying. Perhaps I may one day put on my Sunday clothes, and presenting myself at the great gate, say, 'Open, if you please!' Meanwhile, let us sit down and eat."

Caderousse set the example, and attacked the breakfast with good appetite, praising each dish he set before his visitor. The latter seemed to have resigned himself; he drew the corks and partook largely of the fish with the garlic and fat. "Ah, comrade!" said Caderousse, "you are getting on better terms with your old landlord!"

"Faith, yes," replied Andrea, whose appetite, young and vigorous as he was, prevailed for the moment over everything else.

"So you like it, you rogue?"

"So much that I wonder how a man who cooks and eats so good things can complain of hard living."

"Do you see," said Caderousse, "all my happiness is marred by one thought?"

"What is that?"

"That I am dependent on a friend,—I, who have always gained my own livelihood."

"Do not let that disturb you, I have enough for two."

"No, truly; you may believe me if you will,—at the end of every month I am tormented by remorse."

"Good Caderousse!"

"So much so that yesterday I would not take the two hundred livres."

"Yes, you wished to speak to me; but was it indeed remorse? Tell me."

"True remorse; and besides, an idea had struck me."

Andrea shuddered; he always shuddered at Caderousse's ideas.

"It is miserable—do you see?—always to wait till the end of the month."

"Oh!" said Andrea, philosophically, determined to watch his companion narrowly, "does not life pass in waiting? Do I, for instance, fare better? Well, I wait patiently, do I not?"

"Yes, because instead of expecting two hundred wretched livres, you expect five or six thousand, perhaps ten, perhaps even twelve,—for you are a sly fellow; down there, you always had little purses and money-boxes which you tried to hide from your poor friend Caderousse. Fortunately he had a sharp nose, that friend Caderousse."

"There you are beginning again to ramble, to talk again and again of the past! But what is the use of bothering me with all that?"

"Ah! you are only one-and-twenty, and can forget the past; I am fifty, and am obliged to recollect it. But let us return to business."

"Yes."

"I was going to say, if I were in your place—"

"Well."

"I would realise—"

"How would you realise?"

"I would ask for six months in advance, under pretence of being able to purchase a farm; then with my six months' income I would decamp."

"Well, well," said Andrea, "that is no bad thought."

"My dear friend," said Caderousse, "eat of my bread, and take my advice; you will be none the worse off, physically or morally."

"But," said Andrea, "why do you not act on the advice you give me? Why do you not realise a six months', a year's advance even, and retire to Brussels? Instead of living as the retired baker, you might live as a bankrupt using his privileges; that would be very good."

"But how the devil would you have me retire on twelve hundred livres?"

"Ah, Caderousse," said Andrea, "how covetous you are! Two months since you were dying with hunger."

"In eating, the appetite grows," said Caderousse, grinning and showing his teeth, like a monkey laughing or a tiger growling. "And," added he, biting off with those large white teeth an enormous mouthful of bread, "I have formed a plan."

Caderousse's plans alarmed Andrea still more than his ideas; ideas were but the germ, the plan was reality.

"Let me see your plan; I dare say it is a pretty one."

"Why not? Who formed the plan by which we left the

establishment of M.——, eh? Was it not I? and it was no bad one, I believe, since here we are!"

"I do not say," replied Andrea, "that you never make a good one; but let us see your plan."

"Well," pursued Caderousse, "can you without expending one sou put me in the way of getting fifteen thousand livres?—no, fifteen thousand are not enough, I cannot again become an honest man with less than thirty thousand livres."

"No," replied Andrea, drily,—"no, I cannot."

"I do not think you understand me," replied Caderousse, calmly; "I said without your laying out a sou."

"Do you want me to commit a robbery, to spoil all my good fortune,—and yours with mine,—and both of us to be dragged down there again?"

"It would make very little difference to me," said Caderousse, "if I were retaken; I am a poor creature to live alone, and sometimes pine for my old comrades. I am not like you, a man without heart, who would be glad never to see them again!"

Andrea did more than tremble this time, he turned pale. "Come, Caderousse, no nonsense!" said he.

"Don't alarm yourself, my little Benedetto; but just point out to me some means of gaining those thirty thousand livres without your assistance, and I will contrive it."

"Well, I will see! I will examine!" said Andrea.

"Meanwhile you will raise my monthly stipend to five hundred livres, my little fellow? I have a fancy, and mean to get a housekeeper."

"Well, you shall have your five hundred livres," said Andrea; "but it is very hard for me, my poor Caderousse. You take advantage—"

"Bah!" said Caderousse, "when you have access to countless stores."

One would have said that Andrea expected his companion's words, for his eyes glowed with sudden brightness, which, however, immediately subsided.

"True," he replied, "and my protector is very kind."

"That dear protector!" said Caderousse; "and how much does he give you monthly?"

"Five thousand livres."

"As many thousands as you give me hundreds! truly, it is only bastards who are thus fortunate. Five thousand livres per month! what the devil can you do with all that?"

"Oh, that is very quickly spent; so that I am like you, I want a capital."

"A capital! yes, I understand, every one would like a capital."

"Well! and I shall get one."

"Who will give it to you,—your prince?"

"Yes; my prince. But unfortunately I must wait."

"You must wait for what?" asked Caderousse.

"For his death."

"The death of your prince?"

"Yes."

"How so?"

"Because he has made his will in my favour."

"Indeed?"

"On my honour."

"For how much?"

"For five hundred thousand."

"Only that! It's little enough!"

"But so it is."

"No, it cannot be!"

"Are you my friend, Caderousse?"

"Yes, in life or death."

"Well, I will tell you a secret."

"What is it?"

"But remember—"

"Ah, *pardieu!* mute as a carp."

"Well! I think—"

Andrea stopped and looked around.

"You think? Do not fear; *pardieu!* we are alone."

"I think I have discovered my father."

"Your true father?"

"Yes."

"Not old Cavalcanti?"

"No, for he is gone again; the true one, as you call it."

"And that father is—"

"Well, Caderousse, it is Monte Cristo."

"Bah!"

"Yes, you understand, that explains all. He cannot acknowledge me openly, it appears; but he does it through M. Cavalcanti, and gives him fifty thousand livres for it."

"Fifty thousand livres for being your father! I would have done it for half that, for twenty thousand, for fifteen thousand; why did you not think of me, ungrateful man?"

"Did I know anything about it, when it was all done while I was down there?"

"Ah, truly! And you say that by his will—"

"He leaves me five hundred thousand livres."

"Are you sure of it?"

"He showed it to me. But that is not all; there is a codicil, as I said just now."

"Probably."

"And in that codicil he acknowledges me."

"Oh, the good father! the brave father! the very honest father!" said Caderousse, twirling a plate in the air between his two hands.

"Now, say if I conceal anything from you."

"No, and your confidence does honour to you, in my opinion; and your princely father, is he rich, very rich?"

"Yes, indeed; he does not himself know the amount of his fortune."

"Is it possible?"

"It is evident enough to me, who am always at his house. The other day a banker's clerk brought him fifty thousand livres in a portfolio about the size of your plate; yesterday his banker brought him a hundred thousand livres in gold."

Caderousse was filled with wonder. The young man's words sounded to him like metal; and he thought he could hear the rushing of cascades of louis. "And you go into that house?" cried he, naïvely.

"When I like."

Caderousse was thoughtful for a moment. It was easy to see that he was revolving some important idea in his mind. Then suddenly, "How I should like to see all that!" cried he; "how beautiful it must be!"

"It is, in fact, magnificent," said Andrea.

"And does he not live in the Champs Elysées?"

"Yes; No. 30."

"Ah!" said Caderousse, "No. 30."

"Yes, a fine house standing alone between a courtyard and a garden; you must know it."

"Possibly; but it is not the exterior I care for, it is the interior. What beautiful furniture there must be in it!"

"Have you ever seen the Tuileries?"

"No."

"Well, it surpasses that."

"It must be worth one's while to stoop, Andrea, when that good M. de Monte Cristo lets fall his purse."

"Oh! one is not obliged to wait for that," said Andrea; "money is as plentiful in that house as fruit in an orchard."

"But you should take me there one day with you."

"How can I? On what plea?"

"You are right; but you have made my mouth water. Certainly, I must see it; I shall find a way."

"No nonsense, Caderousse!"

"I will offer myself as floor-polisher."

"The rooms are all carpeted."

"Well, then, I must be content to see all that in imagination."

"That is the best plan, believe me."

"Try at least to give me an idea of what it is."

"How can I?"

"Nothing is easier. Is it large?"

"Middling."

"How is it arranged?"

"Faith, I should require pen, ink, and paper to make a plan."

"They are all here," said Caderousse, briskly. He brought from an old secretary a sheet of white paper, and pen and ink. "Here," said he, "trace me all that on the paper, my boy."

Andrea took the pen with an imperceptible smile, and began. "The house, as I said, is between the court and the garden,—in this way; do you see?" Andrea traced the garden, the court, and the house.

"High walls?"

"Not more than eight or ten feet."

"That is not prudent," said Caderousse.

"In the court are orange-trees in pots, turf, and clumps of flowers."

"And no steel traps?"

"No."

"The stables?"

"Are on either side of the gate, which you see there." And Andrea continued his plan.

"Let us see the ground-floor," said Caderousse.

"On the ground-floor,—dining-room, two drawing-rooms, billiard-room, staircase in the hall, and little back staircase."

"Windows?"

"Magnificent windows, so beautiful, so large, that I believe a man of your size could pass through each square."

"Why the devil have they any stairs with such windows?"

"Luxury has everything."

"But shutters?"

"Yes, but they are never used. That Count of Monte Cristo is an original, who loves to look at the sky even at night."

"And where do the servants sleep?"

"Oh, they have a house to themselves. Picture to yourself

a pretty coach-house at the right-hand side, where the ladders are kept. Well! over that coach-house are the servants' quarters, with bells corresponding with the different rooms."

"Ah, the devil! bells, did you say?"

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing. I only say they cost a load of money to hang; and what is the use of them, I should like to know?"

"Formerly there was a dog who ranged the yard at night; but he has been taken to the house at Auteuil,—to that you went to, you know."

"Yes."

"I was saying to him only yesterday, 'You are imprudent, Monsieur the Count; for when you go to Auteuil and take your servants, the house is left unprotected.' 'Well,' said he, 'what then?' 'Well then, some day you will be robbed.'"

"What did he answer?"

"He said, 'What is it to me if some one robs me?'"

"Andrea, he has some secretary with a spring."

"What do you mean?"

"Yes, which catches the thief in a trap and plays a tune. I was told there were some like that at the last exhibition."

"He has simply a mahogany secretary in which the key is always kept."

"And he is not robbed?"

"No; his servants are all devoted to him."

"There ought to be some money in that secretary."

"There may be. No one knows what there is."

"And where is it?"

"On the first floor."

"Sketch me the plan of that floor as you have sketched that of the ground-floor, my boy."

"That is very simple." Andrea took the pen. "On the first floor, do you see, there is the ante-room and drawing-room; to the right of the drawing-room, a library and a study; to the left, a bedroom and a dressing-room. The famous secretary is in the dressing-room."

"Is there a window in the dressing-room?"

"Two, one here and one there." Andrea sketched two windows in the room, which formed an angle on the plan, and appeared a smaller square added to the long square of the bedroom.

Caderousse became thoughtful. "Does he often go to Auteuil?" he asked.

"Two or three times a week. To-morrow, for instance, he is going to spend the day and night there."

"Are you sure of it?"

"He has invited me to dine there."

"There is a life, for instance," said Caderousse; "a town-house and a country-house."

"That is what it is to be rich."

"And shall you dine there?"

"Probably."

"When you dine there, do you sleep there?"

"If I like; I am at home there."

Caderousse looked at the young man, as if to get at the truth from the bottom of his heart. But Andrea drew a cigar-case from his pocket, took a cigar, quietly lit it, and began to smoke. "When do you want your five hundred livres?" said he to Caderousse.

"Now, if you have them."

Andrea took five-and-twenty louis from his pocket.

"Yellow boys?" said Caderousse; "no, I thank you."

"Oh! you despise them."

"On the contrary, I esteem them, but will not have them."

"You can change them, idiot; gold is worth five sous."

"Exactly; and he who changes them will follow friend Caderousse, lay hands on him, and demand what farmers pay him their rent in gold. No nonsense, my good fellow; silver simply, —round coins with the head of some monarch or other on them. Anybody may possess a five-livre piece."

"But do you suppose I carry five hundred livres about with me? I should want a porter."

"Well, leave them with your porter; he is to be trusted. I will call for them."

"To-day?"

"No, to-morrow; I shall not have time to-day."

"Well, to-morrow I will leave them when I go to Auteuil."

"May I depend on it?"

"Certainly."

"Because I shall secure my housekeeper on the strength of it."

"Stop! will that be all? Eh! And will you not torment me any more?"

"Never." Caderousse had become so gloomy that Andrea feared he should be obliged to notice the change. He redoubled his gaiety and carelessness.

"How sprightly you are!" said Caderousse; "one would say you were already in possession of your property."

"No, unfortunately; but when I do obtain it—"

"Well?"

"I shall remember old friends,—I say no more."

"Yes, since you have such a good memory."

"What do you want? I thought you wanted to fleece me."

"I? What an idea!—I, who am going to give you another piece of good advice."

"What is it?"

"To leave behind you the diamond you have on your finger. We shall both get in trouble. You will ruin both yourself and me by your folly."

"How so?" said Andrea.

"How? You put on a livery; you disguise yourself as a servant, and yet keep a diamond on your finger worth four or five thousand livres."

"*Peste!* you estimate correctly. Why do you not turn auctioneer?"

"I know something of diamonds; I have had some."

"You do well to boast of it," said Andrea, who without becoming angry, as Caderousse feared he would, at this new extortion, quietly resigned the ring. Caderousse looked so closely at it that Andrea well knew that he was trying to ascertain whether all the edges were perfect.

"It is a false diamond," said Caderousse.

"Come, now, are you joking?" replied Andrea.

"Do not be angry; we can try it." Caderousse went to the window, touched the glass with it, and found it would cut.

"*Confiteor!*" said Caderousse, putting the diamond on his little finger; "I was mistaken. But those thieves of jewellers imitate so well that it is no longer worth while to rob a jeweller's shop; it is another branch of industry paralysed."

"Have you finished now?" said Andrea. "Do you want anything more?—will you have my waistcoat or my certificate? Make free now you have begun."

"No; you are, after all, a good companion; I will not detain you, and will try to cure myself of my ambition."

"But take care the same thing does not happen to you in selling the diamond which you feared might happen if you took the gold."

"I shall not sell it; do not fear it."

"Not at least till the day after to-morrow," thought the young man.

"Happy rogue!" said Caderousse; "you are going to find your servants, your horses, your carriage, and your betrothed!"

"Yes," said Andrea.

"Well, I hope you will make me a handsome wedding-present the day you marry the daughter of my friend Danglars."

"I have already told you it is a fancy you have taken in your head."

"What fortune has she?"

"But I tell you—"

"A million?"

Andrea shrugged up his shoulders.

"Let it be a million," said Caderousse; "you can never have so much as I wish you."

"Thank you," said the young man.

"Oh, I wish it with all my heart!" added Caderousse, with his hoarse laugh. "Stop, let me show you the way."

"It is not worth while."

"Yes, it is."

"Why?"

"Because there is a little secret, a precaution I thought it desirable to take,—one of Huret and Fichet's locks, revised and improved by Gaspard Caderousse; I will make you one like it when you are a capitalist."

"Thank you," said Andrea; "I will let you know a week beforehand."

They parted. Caderousse remained on the landing until he had seen Andrea not only go down the three stories, but also cross the court. Then he returned hastily, shut his door carefully, and began to study, like a clever architect, the plan Andrea had left him.

"Dear Benedetto," said he, "I think he will not be sorry to inherit his fortune; and he who hastens the day when he can touch his five hundred thousand will not be his worst friend."

CHAPTER LXXXII

THE BURGLARY

The day following that on which the conversation we have related took place, the Count of Monte Cristo set out for Auteuil, accompanied by Ali and several attendants, and also taking with him some horses whose qualities he was desirous of ascertaining. He was induced to undertake this journey, of which

the day before he had not even thought, and which Andrea had not expected, by the arrival of Bertuccio from Normandy, with intelligence respecting the house and sloop. The house was ready, and the sloop, which had arrived a week before, lay at anchor in a small creek, with her crew of six men, who, after having observed all the requisite formalities, were ready to put to sea. The count praised Bertuccio's zeal, and ordered him to prepare for a speedy departure, as his stay in France would not be prolonged more than a month.

"Now," said he, "I may require to go in one night from Paris to Tréport; let eight fresh horses be in readiness on the road, which will enable me to go fifty leagues in ten hours."

"Your Highness had already expressed that wish," said Bertuccio; "and the horses are ready. I have bought them and stationed them myself at the most desirable posts; namely, in villages where no one generally stops."

"That's well," said Monte Cristo; "I remain here a day or two, arrange accordingly."

As Bertuccio was leaving the room to give the requisite orders, Baptistin opened the door; he held a letter on a silver tray.

"What do you do here?" asked the count, seeing him covered with dust; "I did not send for you, I think?"

Baptistin, without answering, approached the count, and presented the letter. "Important and urgent," said he. The count opened the letter and read:—

"M. de Monte Cristo is apprised that this night a man will enter his house in the Champs Elysées with the intention of carrying off some papers supposed to be in the secretary in the dressing-room. The count's well-known courage will render unnecessary the aid of the police, whose interference might seriously affect him who sends this advice. The count, by any opening from the bedroom, or by concealing himself in the dressing-room, will be able to defend his property himself. Many attendants or apparent precautions would prevent the villain from the attempt; and M. de Monte Cristo would lose the opportunity of discovering an enemy whom chance has revealed to him who now sends this warning to the count,—a warning he might not be able to send another time, if this first attempt should fail and another be made."

The count's first idea was that this was a thieves' trick,—a gross deception, to draw his attention to a minor danger in order to expose him to a greater. He was on the point of sending the letter to the commissary of police, notwithstanding the advice of his anonymous friend, or perhaps because of that advice, when suddenly the idea occurred to him that it might

be some personal enemy whom he alone should recognise, and over whom, if such were the case, he alone could gain any advantage, as Fiesque had done over the Moor who would have killed him. We know the count; we have no need to say that his mind was full of audacity and vigour, and that he addressed himself to the impossible with that energy which alone distinguishes superior men. From his past life, from his resolution to shrink from nothing, the count had acquired an inconceivable relish for the contests in which he had engaged, sometimes against nature, which is God, sometimes against the world, which may pass for the Devil.

"They do not want my papers," said Monte Cristo; "they want to kill me. They are no robbers, but assassins. I will not allow M. le Préfet de Police to interfere with my private affairs. I am rich enough, forsooth, to keep this affair out of the budget of his administration." He recalled Baptistin, who had left the room after delivering the letter. "Return to Paris," said he; "assemble the servants who remain there. I want all my household at Auteuil."

"But will no one remain at the house, my lord?" asked Baptistin.

"Yes, the porter."

"My lord will remember that the lodge is at a distance from the house."

"Well!"

"The house might be stripped without his hearing the least noise."

"By whom?"

"By thieves."

"You are a fool, M. Baptistin! Thieves might strip the house; it would annoy me less than to be disobeyed." Baptistin bowed.

"You understand me?" said the count. "Bring your comrades here, one and all; but let everything remain as usual, only close the shutters of the ground-floor."

"And those of the first floor?"

"You know they are never closed. Go!"

The count signified his intention of dining alone, and that no one but Ali should attend him. Having dined with his usual tranquillity and moderation, the count, making a signal to Ali to follow him, went out by the side gate, and on reaching the Bois de Boulogne, turned, apparently without design, towards Paris, and at twilight found himself opposite his house in the Champs Elysées. All was dark; one solitary, feeble light was

burning in the porter's lodge, about forty paces distant from the house, as Baptistin had said. Monte Cristo leaned against a tree, and with that eye which was so rarely deceived, searched the double avenue, examined the passers-by, and carefully looked down the neighbouring streets to see that no one was concealed. Ten minutes passed thus, and he was convinced that no one was watching him. He hastened to the side door with Ali, entered precipitately, and by the servants' staircase, of which he had the key, gained his bedroom without opening or disarranging a single curtain, without even the porter having the slightest suspicion that the house, which he supposed empty, contained its chief inhabitant.

Arrived in his bedroom, the count motioned to Ali to stop; then he passed into the dressing-room, which he examined. All was as usual,—the precious secretary in its place, and the key in the secretary. He doubly locked it, took the key, returned to the bedroom-door, removed the double staple of the bolt, and went in. Meanwhile, Ali had procured the arms the count required,—namely, a short carbine, and a pair of double-barrelled pistols with which as sure an aim might be taken as with a single-barrelled one. Thus armed, the count held the lives of five men in his hands. It was about half-past nine. The count and Ali ate in haste a crust of bread and drank a glass of Spanish wine; then Monte Cristo slipped aside one of the movable panels, which enabled him to see into the adjoining room. He had within his reach his pistols and carbine, and Ali, standing near him, held one of those small Arabian hatchets whose form has not varied since the Crusades. Through one of the windows of the bedroom, on a line with that in the dressing-room, the count could see into the street. Two hours passed thus. It was intensely dark; still Ali, thanks to his wild nature, and the count, thanks doubtless to his long confinement, could distinguish in the darkness the slightest movement of the trees. The little light in the lodge had been long extinct. It might be expected that the attack, if indeed an attack was projected, would be made from the staircase of the ground-floor, and not from a window. In Monte Cristo's idea, the villains sought his life, not his money. It would be his bedroom they would attack, and they must reach it by the back staircase, or by the window in the dressing-room. He placed Ali before the door to the stairway, and continued to watch the dressing-room.

The clock of the Invalides struck a quarter to twelve; the west wind brought the doleful vibration of the three strokes. As the last stroke died away, the count thought he heard a

slight noise in the direction of the dressing-room. This first sound, or rather this first grinding, was followed by a second, then a third; at the fourth, the count knew what to expect. A firm and well-practised hand was engaged in cutting the four sides of a pane of glass with a diamond. The count felt his heart beat more rapidly. Inured as men may be to danger, forewarned as they may be of peril, they understand, by the fluttering of the heart and the shuddering of the frame, the enormous difference between a dream and a reality, between the project and the execution. However, Monte Cristo only made a sign to apprise Ali, who, understanding that danger was approaching from the side towards the dressing-room, drew nearer to his master. Monte Cristo was eager to ascertain the strength and number of his enemies.

The window whence the noise proceeded was opposite the opening by which the count could see into the dressing-room. He fixed his eyes on that window; he distinguished a shadow in the darkness. Then one of the panes became quite opaque, as if a sheet of paper were stuck on the outside; then the square cracked without falling. Through the opening an arm was passed to find the fastening. A second later the window turned on its hinges, and a man entered. He was alone.

"That's a daring rascal!" murmured the count.

At that moment Ali touched him slightly on the shoulder. He turned; Ali pointed to the window of the room in which they were, facing the street. Monte Cristo took three steps towards that window; he knew the exquisite keenness of his faithful servant's sight. In fact, he saw another man, who, leaving the gate, got up on a fence and seemed trying to see what was taking place in the house. "Good!" said he, "there are two of them; one acts while the other watches." He made a sign to Ali not to lose sight of the man in the street, and returned to the one in the dressing-room.

The glass-cutter had entered, and was feeling his way, his arms stretched out before him. At last he appeared to have made himself familiar with all parts. There were two doors; he bolted them both.

When he drew near to that of the bedroom, Monte Cristo thought he was coming in, and raised one of his pistols; but he simply heard the sound of the bolts sliding in their copper rings. It was only a precaution. The nocturnal visitor, ignorant of the count's having removed the staples, might now think himself at home, and pursue his purpose in all tranquillity. Alone and uncontrolled, the man then drew from his pocket

something which the count could not distinguish, placed it on a stand, then went straight to the secretary, felt the lock, and contrary to his expectation, found that the key was missing. But the glass-cutter was a prudent man, who had provided for all emergencies. The count soon heard the rattling of a bunch of shapeless keys, such as a locksmith brings when called to force a lock, and which thieves call "nightingales," doubtless from the music of their nocturnal song when they grind against the bolt of the lock. "Ah, ah!" whispered Monte Cristo, with a smile of disappointment, "he is only a thief!"

But the man could not, in the dark, find the right key. He reached the instrument he had placed on the stand, touched a spring, and immediately a pale light, just bright enough to render objects distinct, was reflected on the hands and countenance of the man. "Hold!" said Monte Cristo, starting back, with a movement of surprise, "it is—"

Ali raised his hatchet.

"Don't stir," whispered Monte Cristo, "and put down your hatchet; we shall require no arms." Then he added some words in a still lower tone, for the exclamation which surprise had drawn from the count, weak as it had been, had startled the man, who remained in the attitude of the antique "Grinder." It was an order which the count had just given; for immediately Ali went noiselessly, and returned, bearing a black dress and a three-cornered hat. Meanwhile Monte Cristo had rapidly taken off his greatcoat, waistcoat, and shirt; and one might see by the glimmering through the open panel that he wore one of those pliant tunics of steel mail of which the last in France, where daggers are no longer feared, was worn by King Louis XVI., who feared the dagger at his breast, and whose head was cleft with a hatchet. This tunic soon disappeared under a long cassock, as did his hair under a priest's wig; the three-cornered hat over this effectually transformed the count into an abbé.

The man, hearing nothing more, had again raised himself, and while Monte Cristo was completing his disguise, had advanced straight to the secretary, whose lock was beginning to crack under his nightingale.

"Well done!" whispered the count, who doubtless trusted to some secret mechanism, of which the picklock would be ignorant, clever as he might be,—"well done! you have a few minutes' work there." And he advanced to the window. The man whom he had seen seated on a fence had got down, and was still pacing the street; but strangely enough, he showed no concern as to the approach of any one by the avenue of the

Champs Elysées or by the Faubourg St. Honoré. He seemed to be wholly occupied with what might be occurring at the count's; and his only aim appeared to be to discern every movement in the dressing-room.

Monte Cristo suddenly struck his forehead, and a smile passed over his lips; then drawing near to Ali, he whispered, "Remain here, concealed in the dark, and whatever noise you hear, whatever passes, do not come in or show yourself unless I call you." Ali bowed to indicate that he understood and would obey. Monte Cristo then took a lighted taper from a closet, and when the thief was deeply engaged with his lock, silently opened the door, taking care that the light should shine directly on his face. The door opened so quietly that the thief heard no sound; but to his astonishment the room was in a moment light. He turned.

"Good-evening, dear M. Caderousse!" said Monte Cristo, "what are you doing here at such an hour?"

"The Abbé Busoni!" exclaimed Caderousse; and not knowing how this strange apparition could have entered, when he had bolted the doors, he let fall his bunch of keys and remained motionless and stupefied. The count placed himself between Caderousse and the window, thus cutting off from the thief his only chance of retreat. "The Abbé Busoni!" repeated Caderousse, fixing his haggard gaze on the count.

"Yes, certainly, the Abbé Busoni himself!" replied Monte Cristo. "And I am very glad you recognise me, dear M. Caderousse; it proves you have a good memory, for it must be about ten years since we last met."

This calmness of Busoni, combined with his irony and boldness, staggered Caderousse. "The abbé, the abbé!" murmured he, clinching his fists, and his teeth chattering.

"So you would rob the Count of Monte Cristo?" continued the pretended abbé.

"Monsieur the Abbé," murmured Caderousse, seeking to regain the window, which the count pitilessly intercepted,—"Monsieur the Abbé, I don't know—believe me—I take my oath—"

"A pane of glass cut," continued the count, "a dark lantern, a bunch of false keys, a secretary half forced,—it is tolerably evident—"

Caderousse was choking; he looked round for some corner to hide in,—some way to escape.

"Come, come," continued the count, "I see you are still the same,—an assassin."

"Monsieur the Abbé, since you know everything, you know it was not I—it was La Carconte; that was proved at the trial, since I was only condemned to the galleys."

"Is your time, then, expired, since I find you in a fair way to return there?"

"No, Monsieur the Abbé, I have been liberated by some one."

"That some one has done society a great kindness."

"Ah," said Caderousse, "I had promised—"

"And you are breaking your promise!" interrupted Monte Cristo.

"Alas, yes!" said Caderousse, very uneasily.

"A bad relapse, that will lead you, if I mistake not, to the Place de Grève. So much the worse, so much the worse! *Diavolo!* as they say in my country."

"Monsieur the Abbé, I am impelled—"

"Every criminal says the same thing."

"Poverty—"

"Pshaw!" said Busoni, disdainfully; "poverty may make a man ask alms, or steal a loaf of bread at a baker's door, but not break open a secretary in a house supposed to be inhabited. And when the jeweller Johannes had just paid you forty-five thousand livres for the diamond I had given you, and you killed him to get the diamond and the money both, was that also poverty?"

"Pardon, Monsieur the Abbé!" said Caderousse; "you have saved my life once, save me again!"

"That is but poor encouragement."

"Are you alone, Monsieur the Abbé, or have you there soldiers ready to seize me?"

"I am alone," said the abbé; "and I will again have pity on you, and will let you escape, at the risk of the fresh miseries my weakness may lead to,—if you will tell me the truth."

"Ah, Monsieur the Abbé," cried Caderousse, clasping his hands and drawing nearer to Monte Cristo, "I may indeed say that you are my deliverer!"

"You say that some one has delivered you from the galleys?"

"Yes, in truth, Monsieur the Abbé."

"Who was your liberator?"

"An Englishman."

"What was his name?"

"Lord Wilmore."

"I know him; I shall know therefore if you lie."

"Monsieur the Abbé, I tell you the simple truth."

"This Englishman protected you, then?"

"No, not me, but a young Corsican,—my companion in chains."

"What was this young Corsican's name?"

"Benedetto."

"That is a Christian name."

"He had no other; he was a foundling."

"Then this young man escaped with you?"

"He did."

"In what way?"

"We were working at St. Mandrier, near Toulon. Do you know St. Mandrier?"

"I do."

"Well, in the hour of rest, between noon and one o'clock—"

"Galley-slaves having a nap after dinner! We may well pity the poor fellows!" said the abbé.

"Nay," said Caderousse, "one can't always work; one is not a dog!"

"So much the better for the dogs!" said Monte Cristo.

"While the rest slept, then, we went away a short distance; we severed our fetters with a file the Englishman had given us, and swam away."

"And what is become of this Benedetto?"

"I don't know."

"You ought to know."

"No, in truth; we parted at Hyères." And to give more weight to his protestation, Caderousse advanced another step towards the abbé, who remained motionless in his place, calm and questioning.

"You lie!" said the Abbé Busoni, with a tone of irresistible authority.

"Monsieur the Abbé!"

"You lie! This man is still your friend, and you perhaps make use of him as your accomplice."

"Oh, Monsieur the Abbé!"

"Since you left Toulon what have you lived on? Answer me!"

"On what I could get."

"You lie!" said the abbé, a third time, in a tone still more imperative.

Caderousse, terrified, looked at the count.

"You have lived on the money he has given you."

"Well; that is true," said Caderousse. "Benedetto has become the son of a great lord."

"How can he be the son of a great lord?"

"A natural son."

"And what is that great lord's name?"

"The Count of Monte Cristo, the very same in whose house we are."

"Benedetto the count's son!" replied Monte Cristo, astonished in his turn.

"Forsooth! I suppose so, since the count has found him a false father; since the count gives him four thousand livres a month, and leaves him five hundred thousand livres in his will."

"Ah, ah!" said the pretended abbé, who began to understand; "and what name does the young man bear meanwhile?"

"Andrea Cavalcanti."

"Is it, then, that young man whom my friend the Count of Monte Cristo has received into his house, and who is going to marry Mademoiselle Danglars?"

"Exactly."

"And you suffer that, you wretch!—you, who know his life and his disgrace?"

"Why should I stand in a comrade's way?" said Caderousse.

"You are right; it is not you who should apprise M. Danglars, it is I."

"Do not do so, Monsieur the Abbé."

"Why not?"

"Because you would bring us to ruin."

"And you think that to save such villains as you I will become an abettor of their plot,—an accomplice in their crimes?"

"Monsieur the Abbé," said Caderousse, drawing still nearer.

"I will expose all."

"To whom?"

"To M. Danglars."

"By Heaven!" cried Caderousse, drawing from his waistcoat an open knife, and striking the count in the breast, "you shall disclose nothing, Monsieur the Abbé."

To Caderousse's great astonishment, the knife, instead of piercing the count's breast, flew back blunted. At the same moment the count seized with his left hand the assassin's wrist, and wrung it with such strength that the knife fell from his stiffened fingers, and Caderousse uttered a cry of pain. But the count, disregarding his cry, continued to wring the bandit's wrist, until, his arm being dislocated, he fell first on his knees, then flat on the floor. The count then placed his foot on his head, saying, "I know not what restrains me from crushing your skull, you scoundrel!"

"Ah, mercy, mercy!" cried Caderousse.

The count withdrew his foot. "Rise!" said he.

Caderousse rose. "Oh, what a wrist you have, Monsieur the Abbé!" said he, stroking his arm, all bruised by the pincers of flesh which had held it,—"what a wrist!"

"Silence! God gives me strength to overcome a wild beast like you. In the name of that God I act,—remember that, wretch! and to spare you at this moment is still serving him."

"Oh!" said Caderousse, groaning with pain.

"Take this pen and paper, and write what I dictate."

"I don't know how to write, Monsieur the Abbé."

"You lie! Take this pen and write!"

Caderousse, awed by the superior power of the abbé, sat down and wrote:—

SIR,—The man whom you are receiving at your house, and to whom you intend to marry your daughter, is a felon who escaped with me from the galleys of Toulon. He was No. 59, and I No. 58. He was called Benedetto; but he is ignorant of his real name, having never known his parents.

"Sign it!" continued the count.

"But would you ruin me?"

"If I sought your ruin, fool, I should drag you to the first guard-house; besides, when the note is delivered, in all probability you will have no more to fear. Sign it, then!"

Caderousse signed it.

"The address, 'To M. le Baron Danglars, banker, Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin.'"

Caderousse wrote the address. The abbé took the note. "Now," said he, "that suffices; begone!"

"Which way?"

"The way you came."

"You wish me to get out at that window?"

"You got in very well."

"Oh! you have some design against me, Monsieur the Abbé."

"Idiot! what design can I have?"

"Why, then, not let me out by the door?"

"What would be the advantage of waking the porter?"

"Monsieur the Abbé, tell me that you do not wish me dead?"

"I wish what God wills."

"But swear that you will not strike me as I go down."

"Cowardly fool!"

"What do you intend doing with me?"

"I ask you what can I do; I have tried to make you a happy man, and I have made you an assassin."

"Monsieur the Abbé," said Caderousse, "make one more attempt; try me once more!"

"I will," said the count. "Listen! you know that I am a man of my word?"

"Yes," said Caderousse.

"If you arrive safely at home—"

"What have I to fear, except from you?"

"If you reach your home safely, leave Paris, leave France; and wherever you may be, so long as you conduct yourself well, I will send you a small annuity,—for if you return home safely, then—"

"Then?" asked Caderousse, shuddering.

"Then I shall believe God has forgiven you; and I will forgive you too."

"As true as I am a Christian," stammered Caderousse, "you will make me die of fright!"

"Now begone!" said the count, pointing to the window.

Caderousse, but partially reassured by this promise, put his legs out of the window and stood on the ladder.

"Now go down," said the abbé, folding his arms. Understanding he had nothing more to fear from him, Caderousse began to go down. Then the count brought the taper to the window, that it might be seen in the Champs Elysées that a man was getting out of the window while another held a light.

"What are you doing, Monsieur the Abbé? Suppose a watchman should pass?" And he blew out the light. He then descended; but it was only when he felt his foot touch the ground that he was satisfied of his safety.

Monte Cristo returned to his bedroom; and glancing rapidly from the garden to the street, he saw first Caderousse, who after walking to the end of the garden fixed his ladder against the wall at a different part from where he came in. The count then, looking over into the street, saw the man who appeared to be waiting run in the same direction and place himself against the angle of the wall where Caderousse would come over. Caderousse climbed the ladder slowly and looked over the coping to see if the street was quiet. No one could be seen or heard. The clock of the Invalides struck one. Then Caderousse sat astride the coping, and drawing up his ladder passed it over the wall; then be began to descend, or rather to slide down by the two stanchions, which he did with an ease which proved how accustomed he was to the exercise. But once started, he could not stop. In vain did he see a man start from the shade when he was half-way down; in vain did he see an arm raised as he

touched the ground. Before he could defend himself, that arm struck him so violently in the back that he let go the ladder, crying, "Help!" A second blow struck him almost immediately in the side, and he fell, calling, "Help! murder!" Then as he rolled on the ground, his adversary seized him by the hair and struck him a third blow in the chest. This time Caderousse endeavoured to call again; but he could only utter a groan, and he shuddered as the blood flowed from his three wounds. The assassin, finding he no longer cried, lifted his head up by the hair; his eyes were closed and mouth distorted. The murderer, supposing him dead, let fall his head and disappeared. Then Caderousse, feeling that he was leaving him, raised himself on his elbow, and with a dying voice cried with great effort, "Murder! I am dying! Help, Monsieur the Abbé! help!"

This mournful appeal pierced the darkness. The door of the back staircase opened, then the side gate of the garden; and Ali and his master were on the spot with lights.

CHAPTER LXXXIII

THE HAND OF GOD

Caderousse continued to call piteously, "Monsieur the Abbé, help! help!"

"What is the matter?" asked Monte Cristo.

"Help!" cried Caderousse; "I am murdered!"

"We are here; take courage!"

"Ah, it's all over! You have come too late; you have come to see me die. What blows! What blood!" He fainted.

Ali and his master conveyed the wounded man into a room. Monte Cristo motioned to Ali to undress him, and he found the three terrible wounds. "My God!" he exclaimed, "thy vengeance is sometimes delayed, but only that it may fall the more effectually." Ali looked at his master for further instructions. "Conduct here immediately the *procureur du roi*, M. de Villefort, who lives in the Faubourg St. Honoré. As you pass the lodge, wake the porter and send him for a surgeon." Ali obeyed, leaving the abbé alone with Caderousse, who had not yet revived.

When the wretched man again opened his eyes, the count looked at him with a mournful expression of pity, and his lips moved as if in prayer. "A surgeon, Monsieur the Abbé; a surgeon!" said Caderousse.

"I have sent for one," replied the abbé.

"I know he cannot save my life, but he may strengthen me to give my evidence."

"Against whom?"

"Against my murderer."

"Did you recognise him?"

"Yes; it was Benedetto."

"The young Corsican?"

"Himself."

"Your comrade?"

"Yes. After giving me the plan of this house, doubtless hoping I should kill the count and he thus become his heir, or that the count would kill me and I should be out of his way, he waylaid me and has murdered me."

"I have also sent for the *procureur du roi*."

"He will not come in time; I feel my life fast ebbing."

"Wait!" said Monte Cristo. He left the room, and returned in five minutes with a phial.

The dying man's eyes were all the time riveted on the door, through which he hoped succour would arrive. "Hasten, Monsieur the Abbé! hasten! I shall faint again!"

Monte Cristo approached and dropped on his purple lips three or four drops of the contents of the phial. Caderousse drew a deep breath. "Oh!" said he, "that is life to me; more, more!"

"Two drops more would kill you," replied the abbé.

"Oh, if only some one would come to whom I might denounce the villain!"

"Shall I write your deposition? You can sign it."

"Yes, yes," said Caderousse; and his eyes glistened at the thought of this posthumous revenge. Monte Cristo wrote:—

"I die murdered by the Corsican Benedetto, my companion in chains in the galleys at Toulon, No. 59."

"Quick, quick!" said Caderousse, "or I shall be unable to sign it."

Monte Cristo gave the pen to Caderousse, who collected all his strength, signed it, and fell back on the bed, saying, "You will relate all the rest, Monsieur the Abbé; you will say he calls himself Andrea Cavalcanti. He lodges at the Hôtel des Princes. Oh, I am dying!" He again fainted. The abbé made him smell the contents of the phial, and he again opened his eyes. His desire for revenge had not forsaken him.

"Ah, you will tell all I have said; will you not, Monsieur the Abbé?"

" Yes, and much more."

" What more will you say? "

" I will say he had doubtless given you the plan of this house, in the hope that the count would kill you. I will say, likewise, he had apprised the count by a note of your intention; and the count being absent, I read the note and sat up to await you."

" And he will be guillotined, will he not? " said Caderousse. " Promise me that; I die with that hope,—it will help me to die."

" I will say," continued the count, " that he followed you and watched you all the time, and when he saw you leave the house, ran to the angle of the wall to conceal himself."

" Did you see all that? "

" Remember my words: ' If you return home safely, I shall believe God has forgiven you, and I will forgive you also.' "

" And you did not warn me! " cried Caderousse, raising himself on his elbow. " You knew I should be killed on leaving this house, and did not warn me! "

" No, for I saw God's justice placed in the hands of Benedetto, and should have thought it sacrilege to oppose the designs of Providence."

" God's justice! Speak not of it, Monsieur the Abbé. If God were just, you know that many would be punished who now escape."

" Patience! " said the abbé, in a tone which made the dying man shudder; " have patience! "

Caderousse looked at him with amazement.

" Besides," said the abbé, " God is merciful to all, as he has been to you; he is first a father, then a judge."

" Do you then believe in God? " said Caderousse.

" Had I been so unhappy as not to believe in him until now," said Monte Cristo, " I must believe on seeing you."

Caderousse raised his clinched hands towards heaven.

" Listen," said the abbé, extending his hand over the wounded man, as if to command him to believe; " this is what the God in whom on your death-bed you refuse to believe has done for you: he gave you health, strength, regular employment, even friends,—a life, in fact, in which a man might enjoy a calm conscience and the satisfaction of natural desires. Instead of improving these gifts, rarely granted so abundantly, this has been your course: you have given yourself up to sloth and drunkenness, and in a fit of intoxication have ruined one of your best friends."

" Help! " cried Caderousse, " I require a surgeon, not a priest.

Perhaps I am not mortally wounded; perhaps I shall not yet die; perhaps they can yet save my life."

"Your wounds are so far mortal that without the three drops I gave you you would now be dead. Listen, then."

"Ah!" murmured Caderousse, "what a strange priest you are! you drive the dying to despair instead of consoling them."

"Listen," continued the abbé. "When you had betrayed your friend, God began not to strike, but to warn you. Poverty overtook you; you had already passed half your life in coveting that which you might have honourably acquired; and already you contemplated crime under the excuse of want, when God worked a miracle in your behalf, sending you by my hands a fortune,—brilliant, indeed, for you, who had never possessed any. But this unexpected, unhoped-for, unheard-of fortune sufficed you no longer when you once possessed it. You wished to double it; and how? By a murder! You succeeded; and then God snatched it from you, and brought you to justice."

"It was not I who wished to kill the Jew," said Caderousse; "it was La Carconte."

"Yes," said Monte Cristo, "and God,—I cannot say in justice, for his justice would have slain you,—but God in his mercy spared your life."

"*Pardieu!* to send me to the galleys for life; how merciful!"

"You thought it a mercy then, miserable wretch! Your cowardly heart, which trembled at the thought of death, bounded with joy at the announcement of perpetual disgrace. For like all galley-slaves, you said, 'There is a door to the galleys; there is none to the tomb.' And you were right; for that door to the galleys was opened for you in a manner not to be expected. An Englishman visited Toulon who had vowed to rescue two men from infamy, and his choice fell on you and your companion. You received a second fortune,—money and tranquillity were restored to you; and you, who had been condemned to a felon's life, might live as other men. Then, wretched creature!—then you tempted God a third time. 'I have not enough,' you said, when you had more than you had ever before possessed; and you committed a third crime without reason, without excuse. God is wearied; he has punished you."

Caderousse was fast sinking. "Give me drink!" said he; "I thirst, I burn!" Monte Cristo gave him a glass of water. "And yet that villain Benedetto," said Caderousse, returning the glass, "will escape!"

"No one, I tell you, will escape; Benedetto will be punished."

"Then you too will be punished, for you did not do your duty as a priest; you should have prevented Benedetto from killing me."

"I?" said the count, with a smile which petrified the dying man with fear,—"when you had just broken your knife against the coat of mail which protected my breast! Yet perhaps if I had found you humble and penitent, I might have prevented Benedetto from killing you; but I found you proud and bloodthirsty, and I left you in the hands of God."

"I do not believe there is a God!" howled Caderousse; "you do not believe it either. You lie! you lie!"

"Silence!" said the abbé, "you will force the last drop of blood from your veins. What! you do not believe in God when he is striking you dead? You will not believe in him who requires but a prayer, a word, a tear, and he will forgive? God, who might have directed the assassin's dagger so as to end your career in a moment, has given you this quarter of an hour for repentance. Reflect, then, wretched man, and repent."

"No," said Caderousse, "no; I will not repent. There is no God, there is no Providence,—there is only chance."

"There is a Providence; there is a God," said Monte Cristo. "And the proof is that you are lying there, despairing, denying him; while I stand before you, rich, happy, safe, and entreating that God in whom you endeavour not to believe, while in your heart you still believe in him."

"But who are you, then?" asked Caderousse, fixing his dying eyes on the count.

"Look well at me!" said Monte Cristo, putting the light near his face.

"Well, the abbé,—the Abbé Busoni."

Monte Cristo took off the wig which disfigured him, and let fall his black hair, which added so much to the beauty of his pallid features.

"Oh!" said Caderousse, thunderstruck, "but for that black hair I should say you were the Englishman, Lord Wilmore."

"I am neither the Abbé Busoni nor Lord Wilmore," said Monte Cristo. "Think again; search farther away,—search among your earlier memories." There was a magic effect in the count's words which once more revived the exhausted powers of the miserable man.

"Yes, indeed," said he; "I think I have seen you and known you formerly."

"Yes, Caderousse, you have seen me; you knew me once."

"Who then are you; and why, if you knew me, do you let me die?"

"Because nothing can save you,—your wounds are mortal. Had it been possible to save you, I should have considered it another proof of God's mercy, and I would again have endeavoured to restore you; I swear by my father's tomb!"

"By your father's tomb!" said Caderousse, reanimated by a last flash of life, and half raising himself to see more distinctly the man who had just taken the oath which all men hold sacred; "who, then, are you?"

The count had watched the approach of death. He knew this burst of life was the last; he approached the dying man, and leaning over him with a calm and melancholy look, he whispered, "I am—I am ——" And his almost closed lips uttered a name so low that the count himself appeared afraid to hear it. Caderousse, who had raised himself on his knees and stretched out his arm, tried to draw back; then clasping his hands, and raising them with a desperate effort, "Oh, my God! my God!" said he, "pardon me for having denied thee! Thou dost exist; thou art indeed man's father in heaven, and his judge on earth. My God, my Lord, I have long despised thee! Pardon me, my God; receive me, O my Lord!" He closed his eyes and fell back with a last groan, with a last sigh. The blood no longer flowed from his wounds; he was dead.

"*One!*" said the count, mysteriously, his eyes fixed on the corpse, disfigured by so awful a death. Ten minutes afterwards the surgeon and the *procureur du roi* arrived,—the one accompanied by the porter, the other by Ali,—and were received by the Abbé Busoni, who was praying by the side of the corpse.

CHAPTER LXXXIV

BEAUCHAMP

THE daring attempt to rob the count was the topic of conversation throughout Paris for the next fortnight. The dying man had signed a deposition declaring Benedetto to be the assassin. The police had orders to make the strictest search for the murderer. Caderousse's knife, dark lantern, bunch of keys, and clothing, excepting the waistcoat, which could not be found, were deposited at the registry; the corpse was conveyed to the morgue. The count told every one that this adventure had happened during his absence at Auteuil, and that he only knew

what was related by the Abbé Busoni, who that evening by mere chance had requested permission to pass the night in his house to examine some valuable books in his library. Bertuccio alone turned pale whenever Benedetto's name was mentioned in his presence; but there was no reason why any one should notice his doing so. Villefort, being called on to prove the crime, had taken up the affair, and was conducting the preparation with that passionate ardour which he put into all the criminal causes in which he took part.

But three weeks had already passed, and the most diligent search had been unsuccessful; the attempted robbery and the murder of the robber by his comrade were almost forgotten in anticipation of the approaching marriage of Mademoiselle Danglars to the Comte Andrea Cavalcanti. The marriage was virtually announced; and the young man was received at the banker's as the betrothed. Letters had been despatched to M. Cavalcanti, as the count's father, who highly approved of the union, regretted his inability to leave Parma at that time, and promised to give the amount of capital required to produce one hundred and fifty thousand livres per year in interest. It was agreed that the three millions should be intrusted to Danglars for investment. Some persons had warned the young man of the circumstances of his future father-in-law, who had of late sustained repeated losses; but with sublime disinterestedness the young man repelled all such intimations, and delicately refrained from speaking of them to the baron. The baron adored Comte Andrea Cavalcanti; not so Mademoiselle Eugénie Danglars. With an instinctive hatred of matrimony, she suffered Andrea's attentions in order to get rid of Morcerf; but when Andrea urged his suit, she betrayed a visible repugnance to him. The baron perhaps perceived it, but attributing it to caprice, feigned ignorance.

The delay demanded by Beauchamp had nearly expired. Morcerf had an opportunity to appreciate the value of Monte Cristo's advice to let matters drop. No one had taken up the remark about the general, and no one had recognised in the officer who betrayed the castle of Janina the noble count in the Chamber of Peers. Albert, however, felt no less insulted; the few lines which had irritated him were certainly intended as an insult. Besides, the manner in which Beauchamp had closed the conference left a bitter recollection in his heart. He therefore still cherished in his mind the expectation of the duel, hoping to conceal its true cause even from his seconds.

Beauchamp had not been seen since the day Albert visited

him; and those of whom Albert inquired always told him he was away on a journey which would detain him some days. Where he was no one knew. One morning Albert was awakened by his *valet de chambre*, who announced Beauchamp. Albert rubbed his eyes, ordered his servant to introduce him into the small smoking-room on the ground-floor, dressed himself quickly, and went down. He found Beauchamp pacing the room; on perceiving him, Beauchamp stopped.

"Your arrival here, without waiting my visit at your house to-day, looks well, monsieur," said Albert. "Tell me, may I shake hands with you, saying, 'Beauchamp, acknowledge that you have injured me, and retain my friendship,' or must I simply propose to you a choice of arms?"

"Albert," said Beauchamp, with a look of sorrow which stupefied the young man, "let us first sit down and talk."

"Rather, monsieur, before we sit down, I must demand your answer."

"Albert," said the journalist, "there are circumstances which make the answer difficult."

"I will make it easy for you by repeating the question, 'Will you, or will you not, retract?'"

"Morcerf, it is not enough to answer Yes or No to questions which concern the honour, the social interest, and the life of such a man as the Lieutenant-Général Comte de Morcerf, peer of France."

"What then, should be done?"

"What I have done, Albert. I reasoned thus: Money, time, and fatigue are nothing compared with the reputation and interests of a whole family; probabilities will not suffice, only facts will justify a deadly combat with a friend. If I strike with the sword, or discharge the contents of a pistol at a man with whom for three years I have been on terms of intimacy, I must at least know why I do so; I must meet him with a heart at ease, and that quiet conscience which a man needs when his own arm must save his life."

"Well," asked Morcerf, impatiently, "what does all this mean?"

"It means that I have just returned from Janina."

"From Janina?"

"Yes."

"Impossible!"

"Here is my passport; examine the *visa*,—Geneva, Milan, Venice, Trieste, Delvino, Janina. Will you believe the police of a republic, a kingdom, and an empire?"

Albert cast his eyes on the passport, then raised them in astonishment to Beauchamp. "You have been to Janina?" said he.

"Albert, had you been a stranger, a foreigner, a simple lord, like that Englishman who came to demand satisfaction three or four months since, and whom I killed to get rid of, I should not have taken this trouble; but I thought this mark of consideration due to you. I took a week to go, another to return, four days of quarantine, and forty-eight hours to stay there; that makes three weeks. I returned last night, and here I am."

"What circumlocution! How long you are before you tell me what I most wish to know!"

"Because, in truth, Albert—"

"You hesitate!"

"Yes, I fear."

"You fear to acknowledge that your correspondent has deceived you? Oh! down with your pride, Beauchamp! Acknowledge it, Beauchamp; your courage cannot be doubted."

"Oh, it is not that," murmured the journalist; "on the contrary—"

Albert turned frightfully pale; he endeavoured to speak, but the words died on his lips.

"My friend," said Beauchamp, in the most affectionate tone, "I should gladly make an apology; but alas!—"

"But what?"

"The paragraph was correct, my friend."

"What! that French officer—"

"Yes."

"That Fernand?"

"Yes."

"The traitor who surrendered the castle of the man in whose service he was—"

"Pardon me, my friend, that man was your father!"

Albert advanced furiously towards Beauchamp, but the latter restrained him more by a mild look than by his extended hand. "Hold! my friend," he said, drawing a paper from his pocket; "here is the proof."

Albert opened the paper; it was an attestation of four notable inhabitants of Janina, proving that Colonel Fernand Mondego, in the service of Ali Tebelin, had surrendered the castle for two million crowns. The signatures were authenticated by the consul. Albert tottered and fell overpowered in a chair. It could no longer be doubted,—the family name was fully given. After a moment's mournful silence, his heart overflowed, and

he gave way to a flood of tears. Beauchamp, who had watched with sincere pity the young man's paroxysm of grief, approached him. "Now, Albert," said he, "you understand me, do you not? I wished to see all, and to judge of everything for myself, hoping the explanation would be in your father's favour, and that I might do him justice. But on the contrary, the particulars which are given prove that Fernand Mondego, raised by Ali Pacha to the rank of governor-general, is no other than Comte Fernand de Morcerf; then, recollecting the honour you had done me in admitting me to your friendship, I hastened to you."

Albert, still extended on the chair, covered his face with both hands, as if to prevent the light from reaching him.

"I hastened to you," continued Beauchamp, "to tell you, Albert, that in this changing age the faults of a father cannot revert upon his children. Few have passed through this revolutionary period, in the midst of which we were born, without some stain of infamy or blood to soil the uniform of the soldier, the robe of the judge. Now that I have these proofs, Albert, now that I am master of your secret, no human power can force me to a duel which your own conscience would reproach you with as criminal; but what you can no longer demand of me I come to offer you. Do you wish these proofs, these attestations, which I alone possess, to be destroyed? Do you wish this frightful secret to remain with us? Confided to me, it shall never escape my lips; say, Albert, my friend, do you wish it?"

Albert threw himself on Beauchamp's neck. "Ah, noble heart!" cried he.

"Take these," said Beauchamp, presenting the papers to Albert.

Albert seized them with a convulsive hand, tore them in pieces, and trembling lest the least vestige should escape, and one day appear to confront him, he approached the waxlight, always kept burning for cigars, and consumed every fragment. "Dear, excellent friend!" he murmured, still burning the papers.

"Let all be forgotten as a sorrowful dream," said Beauchamp; "let it vanish as the last sparks from the blackened paper, and disappear as the smoke from those silent ashes."

"Yes, yes," said Albert; "and may there remain only the eternal friendship which I promise to my deliverer, which shall be transmitted to our children's children, and shall always remind me that I owe my life and the honour of my name to

you! for had this been known, oh! Beauchamp, I should have destroyed myself, or—no, my poor mother! I could not have killed her by the same blow—I should have fled from my country."

"Dear Albert!" said Beauchamp.

But this sudden and factitious joy soon forsook the young man, and was succeeded by still greater grief.

"Well," said Beauchamp, "what still oppresses you, my friend?"

"I am broken-hearted," said Albert. "Listen, Beauchamp! I cannot thus in a moment relinquish the respect, the confidence, and pride with which a father's untarnished name inspires a son. Oh, Beauchamp, Beauchamp! how shall I now approach mine? Shall I draw back my forehead from his embrace, or withhold my hand from his? I am the most wretched of men. Ah, my mother, my poor mother!" said Albert, gazing through his tears at his mother's portrait; "if you have known this, how much must you have suffered!"

"Come," said Beauchamp, taking both his hands, "take courage, my friend."

"But how came that first note inserted in your journal? Behind all this there is an unknown hatred, an invisible enemy."

"The more must you fortify yourself, Albert. Let no trace of emotion be visible on your countenance; bear your grief as the cloud bears within it ruin and death,—a fatal secret, known only when the storm bursts. Go, my friend, reserve your strength for the moment when the crash shall come."

"You think, then, all is not over yet?" said Albert, horror-stricken.

"I think nothing, my friend; but all things are possible. By the way—"

"What?" said Albert, seeing Beauchamp hesitated.

"Are you going to marry Mademoiselle Danglars?"

"Why do you ask me now?"

"Because in my opinion the rupture or fulfilment of this engagement is connected with the matter which at this moment engages our attention."

"How?" said Albert, whose brow reddened; "you think that M. Danglars—"

"I ask you only how your engagement stands? Pray put no construction on my words which I do not mean they should convey, and give them no undue weight."

"No," said Albert; "the engagement is broken off."

"Well!" said Beauchamp. Then, seeing the young man

was about to relapse into melancholy, "Let us go out, Albert," said he; "a ride in the wood in the phaeton, or on horseback, will refresh you. We will then return to breakfast, and you shall attend to your affairs, and I to mine."

"Willingly," said Albert; "but let us walk. I think a little exertion would do me good."

The two friends walked out on the boulevard. When arrived at the Madeleine, "Since we are out," said Beauchamp, "let us call on M. de Monte Cristo; he is admirably qualified to revive one's spirits, because he never asks questions; and in my opinion those who ask no questions are the best comforters."

"Gladly," said Albert. "I love him; let us call."

CHAPTER LXXXV

THE JOURNEY

MONTE CRISTO uttered a joyful exclamation on seeing the two young men together. "Ah, ah!" said he, "I hope all is over, explained, and settled."

"Yes," said Beauchamp; "the absurd reports have died away. And should they be renewed, I would be the first to oppose them; so let us speak no more of it."

"Albert will tell you," replied the count, "that I gave him the same advice. Look," added he, "I am finishing the most execrable morning's work."

"What is it?" said Albert; "arranging your papers, apparently."

"My papers, thank God, no! my papers are all in capital order, because I have none; but M. Cavalcanti's."

"M. Cavalcanti's?" asked Beauchamp.

"Yes; do you not know that this is a young man whom the count is introducing?" said Morcerf.

"Let us not misunderstand each other," replied Monte Cristo; "I introduce no one, and certainly not M. Cavalcanti."

"And who," continued Albert, with a forced smile, "is to marry Mademoiselle Danglars in my place, which, my dear Beauchamp, as you may well imagine, grieves me cruelly."

"What! Cavalcanti is going to marry Mademoiselle Danglars?" asked Beauchamp.

"Certainly! do you come from the end of the world?" said Monte Cristo. "You, a journalist, the husband of Renown! it is the talk of all Paris."

"And you, count, have made this match?" asked Beauchamp

"I? Silence, Monsieur the News-man, do not spread that report. I make a match! No, you do not know me! I have, on the contrary, done all in my power to oppose it."

"Ah! I understand," said Beauchamp, "on our friend Albert's account."

"On my account?" said the young man; "oh, no, indeed! The count will do me the justice to assert that I have, on the contrary, always entreated him to break off my engagement; and happily it is ended. The count pretends I have not him to thank; so be it,—I will erect, like the ancients, an altar *Deo ignoto.*"

"Listen," said Monte Cristo; "I have had little to do with it, for I am at variance both with the father-in-law and with the young man; there is only Mademoiselle Eugénie,—who appears but little charmed with the thoughts of matrimony,—who, seeing how little I was disposed to persuade her to renounce her dear liberty, retains any affection for me."

"And do you say this wedding is at hand?"

"Oh, yes, in spite of all I could say. I do not know the young man; he is said to be of good family and rich, but to me these are mere rumours. I have repeated this to M. Danglars till I am tired, but he is fascinated with his Lucquois. I have even informed him of a circumstance I consider very serious: the young man was either changed by his nurse, stolen by gypsies, or lost by his tutor, I scarcely know which. But I do know his father lost sight of him for more than ten years; what he did during these ten years, God only knows. Well, all that was useless. They have commissioned me to write to the major to demand papers; and here they are. I send them, but like Pilate, washing my hands."

"And what does Mademoiselle d'Armilly say to you," asked Beauchamp, "for robbing her of her pupil?"

"Forsooth! I know not; but I understand she is going to Italy. Madame Danglars asked me for letters of recommendation for the *impresari;* I gave her a few lines for the director of the Valle Theatre, who is under some obligation to me. But what is the matter, Albert? you look dull; are you, after all, unconsciously in love with Mademoiselle Eugénie?"

"I am not aware of it," said Albert, with a sorrowful smile.

Beauchamp turned to look at some paintings.

"But," continued Monte Cristo, "you are not in your usual spirits. Come, what is the matter with you? speak!"

"I have a headache," said Albert.

"Well, my dear viscount," said Monte Cristo, "I have an

infallible remedy to propose to you, — a remedy which has succeeded with me every time that I have met with any annoyance."

"What is it?"

"A change."

"Indeed!" said Albert.

"Yes; and as I am just now excessively annoyed, I shall go from home. Shall we go together?"

"You annoyed, count?" said Beauchamp; "and by what?"

"*Pardieu!* you think very lightly of it; I should like to see you with a criminal process preparing in your house."

"What criminal process?"

"The one M. de Villefort is preparing against my amiable assassin,—some brigand escaped from the galleys, apparently."

"True," said Beauchamp; "I saw it in the papers. Who is this Caderousse?"

"Some provincial, it appears. M. de Villefort heard of him at Marseilles, and M. Danglars recollects having seen him. Consequently, M. le Procureur du roi is very active in the affair, and the prefect of police very much interested; and thanks to that interest, for which I am very grateful, they send me all the robbers of Paris and the neighbourhood, under pretence of their being Caderousse's murderers. So that in three months, if this continue, every robber and assassin in France will have the plan of my house at his finger's end. I am resolved to desert them and to go to some remote corner of the earth, and shall be happy if you will accompany me, viscount."

"Willingly."

"Then it is settled?"

"Yes, but where?"

"I have told you,—where the air is pure, where every sound soothes, where one is sure to be humbled, however proud may be his nature. I like that humiliation,—I, who have been called master of the universe, like Augustus."

"But where are you really going?"

"To the sea, viscount, to the sea. You know I am a sailor. I was rocked when an infant in the arms of old Ocean, and on the bosom of the beautiful Amphitrite; I have sported with the green mantle of the one and the azure robe of the other. I love the sea as a mistress, and pine if I do not often see her."

"Let us go, count."

"To the sea?"

"Yes."

"You accept my proposal?"

"I do."

"Well, viscount, there will be in my courtyard this evening a good travelling britzska, with four post-horses, in which one may rest as in a bed. M. Beauchamp, it holds four very well, will you accompany us?"

"Thank you, I have just returned from the sea."

"What! you have been to the sea?"

"Yes; I have just made a little excursion to the Borromei Islands."

"What of that? come with us," said Albert.

"No, dear Morcerf; you know I only refuse when the thing is impossible. Besides, it is important," added he, in a low tone, "that I should remain in Paris just now to watch the paper."

"Ah! you are a good and an excellent friend," said Albert. "Yes, you are right; watch, watch, Beauchamp, and try to discover the enemy who has made this disclosure."

Albert and Beauchamp parted; the last pressure of their hands expressed what their tongues could not before a stranger.

"Beauchamp is a worthy fellow," said Monte Cristo, when the journalist was gone; "is he not, Albert?"

"Yes, and a sincere friend; I love him devotedly. But now we are alone, although it is immaterial to me, where are we going?"

"Into Normandy, if you like."

"Delightful; shall we be quite retired,—no society, no neighbours?"

"Our companions will be riding-horses, dogs to hunt with, and a fishing-boat."

"Exactly what I wish for; I will apprise my mother of my intention, and return to you."

"But will you be allowed to go into Normandy?"

"I may go where I please."

"Yes, I am aware you may go alone, since I once met you in Italy—but to accompany the mysterious Monte Cristo?"

"You forget, count, that I have often told you of the deep interest my mother takes in you."

"'Woman is fickle,' said Francis I.; 'woman is like a wave of the sea,' said Shakespeare. The one was a great king, the other a great poet; and both of them should know woman."

"Yes, woman; but my mother is not woman, she is a woman."

"Will you pardon a poor foreigner for not understanding fully the subtleties of your language?"

"I mean that my mother is slow in bestowing regard, but when once accorded, it is for ever."

"Ah, indeed," said Monte Cristo, sighing; "and do you think that she does me the honour to regard me otherwise than with complete indifference?"

"Listen! I have already said, and I repeat, that you must be a man very wonderful, and very superior."

"Oh!"

"Yes, for my mother is so absorbed by the interest you have excited, that when I am with her she speaks of no one else."

"And does she endeavour to make you distrust that Manfred?"

"On the contrary, she says, 'Morcerf, I believe the count to be a noble man; try to gain his esteem.'"

Monte Cristo turned away his eyes and sighed; "Ah, indeed!" he said.

"You see, then," said Albert, "that instead of objecting to my journey, she will heartily approve it, since it is in the line of the advice she gives me every day."

"Adieu, then, until five o'clock; be punctual, and we shall arrive at twelve or one."

"At Tréport?"

"Yes; or in the neighbourhood."

"But can we travel forty-eight leagues in eight hours?"

"Easily," said Monte Cristo.

"You are certainly a worker of wonders; you will soon not only surpass the railway, which would not be very difficult, in France especially, but even the telegraph."

"Meanwhile, viscount, since we cannot perform the journey in less than seven or eight hours, be punctual."

"Do not fear, I have nothing to do but to get ready."

Albert took his departure. Monte Cristo had smiled as he nodded to Albert, then remained a moment absorbed in deep meditation. Then, passing his hand across his forehead as if to dispel his reverie, he rang the bell twice, and Bertuccio entered. "Bertuccio," said he, "I intend going this evening to Normandy, instead of to-morrow or the next day; you will have sufficient time before five o'clock. Despatch a messenger to apprise the grooms at the first station. M. de Morcerf will accompany me. Go."

Bertuccio obeyed, and a courier hastened to Pontoise to say that the travelling-carriage would arrive at six o'clock. From Pontoise another express was sent to the next stage, and in six hours all the horses stationed on the road were ready. Before

his departure, the count went to Haydée's apartments, told her his intention, and resigned everything to her care.

Albert was punctual. The journey, gloomy at first, soon became interesting through the physical effect of speed. Morcerf had no idea of such rapidity.

"Truly," said Monte Cristo, "with your post-horses going at the rate of two leagues an hour, and that absurd law that one traveller shall not pass another without permission, so that an invalid or ill-tempered traveller may detain those who are well and active, it is impossible to move. I escape this annoyance by travelling with my own postilion and horses; do I not, Ali?"

The count put his head out of the window and whistled, and the horses appeared to fly. The carriage rolled with a thundering noise over the pavement; and every one turned to notice the dazzling meteor. Ali, smiling, repeated the sound, grasped the reins with a firm hand, and urged on his horses, whose beautiful manes floated in the breeze. This child of the desert was in his element, and with his black face and sparkling eyes, appeared, in the cloud of dust he raised, like the genius of the simoom and the god of the hurricane.

"I never knew till now the delight of speed," said Morcerf; and the last cloud disappeared from his brow. "But where the devil do you get such horses? Are they made to order?"

"Precisely," said the count. "Six years ago I bought in Hungary a famous stallion celebrated for speed,—costing I don't know how much; Bertuccio paid. The thirty-two horses that we shall use to-night are his progeny; they are all entirely black, with the exception of a star upon the forehead."

"It is wonderful! but what do you do, count, with all these horses?"

"You see, I travel with them."

"But you are not always travelling."

"When I no longer require them, Bertuccio will sell them; and he expects to realise thirty or forty thousand livres by the sale."

"But no monarch in Europe will be wealthy enough to purchase them."

"Then he will sell them to some Eastern vizier, who will empty his coffers to purchase them, and refill them by applying the bastinado to his subjects."

"Count, may I suggest one idea to you?"

"Certainly."

"It is that next to you, Bertuccio must be the richest private person in Europe."

"You are mistaken, viscount; I am sure that if you empty Bertuccio's pockets you will not find the value of ten sous."

"Then he must be a wonder. My dear count, if you tell me many more marvellous things, I warn you I shall not believe them."

"I countenance nothing that is marvellous, Albert; tell me, why does a steward rob his master?"

"Because, I suppose, it is his nature to do so, for the love of robbing."

"You are mistaken; it is because he has a wife and family, and ambitious desires for himself and them. Also because he is not sure of always retaining his situation, and wishes to provide for the future. Now, M. Bertuccio is alone in the world; he uses my property without accounting for the use he makes of it. He is sure never to leave my service."

"Why?"

"Because I should never get a better."

"You are begging the question, and are still dealing in probabilities."

"Oh, not at all; I deal in certainties. He is the best servant over whom you have the power of life and death."

"Do you possess that right over Bertuccio?"

"Yes," replied the count, coldly.

There are words which close a conversation as if with an iron door; such was the count's "yes." The whole journey was performed with equal rapidity; the thirty-two horses, divided into eight relays, made the forty-seven leagues in eight hours. They arrived in the middle of the night at the gate of a beautiful park. The porter was up, and held the gate open; he had been notified by the groom of the last stage. At half-past two in the morning Morcerf was conducted to his apartments, where a bath and supper were prepared. The servant who had travelled at the back of the carriage waited on him; Baptistin, who had ridden in front, attended the count. Albert bathed, took his supper, and went to bed. All night he was lulled by the melancholy noise of the swell of the sea. On rising, he went to his window, opened it, and found himself on a small terrace, where before him was the sea,—that is to say, immensity,—and behind him a pretty park bounded by a small forest. In a creek lay a little sloop, of narrow beam and with high masts, bearing on its flag the Monte Cristo arms, which were a mountain, or, on a sea, azure, with a cross, gules, on the shield. This device might contain allusion to the name "Monte Cristo," suggesting Calvary, which the passion of our Lord has made

a mountain more precious than gold, and to the infamous cross which his divine blood has made sacred, or to some personal experience of suffering and regeneration shrouded in this man's mysterious past. Around the sloop lay a number of small fishing-boats belonging to the fishermen of the neighbouring village, like humble subjects awaiting orders from their queen. There, as in every spot where Monte Cristo stopped, if but for two days, all was comfort; life became easy.

Albert found in his ante-room two guns, with all the accoutrements for hunting; a higher room, on the ground-floor, contained all the ingenious instruments which the English—good fishermen, because patient and idle—have not yet persuaded the routine fishermen of France to adopt. The day passed in pursuing those exercises, in which Monte Cristo excelled; they killed a dozen pheasants in the park, caught as many trout in the stream, dined in a turret overlooking the ocean, and took tea in the library.

Towards the evening of the third day, Albert, completely tired with the exercise, which appeared sport to Monte Cristo, was sleeping in an armchair near the window, while the count was designing with his architect the plan of a conservatory in his house, when the sound of a horse at full speed on the high-road made Albert look up. He was disagreeably surprised to see in the courtyard his own *valet de chambre*, whom he had not ordered to follow him, lest he should inconvenience Monte Cristo.

"Florentin here!" cried he, starting up. "Is my mother ill?" And he hastened to the door. Monte Cristo watched him; he saw him approach the valet, who drew a small sealed parcel from his pocket containing a newspaper and a letter. "From whom is this?" said he, eagerly.

"From M. Beauchamp," replied Florentin.

"Did he send you?"

"Yes, monsieur; he sent for me to come to his house, gave me money for my journey, procured a horse, and made me promise not to stop till I had rejoined you. I have come in fifteen hours."

Albert opened the letter, shuddering. On reading the first lines, he uttered an exclamation and seized the paper. Suddenly his sight became dim, his legs sank under him, and he would have fallen had not Florentin supported him.

"Poor young man!" said Monte Cristo, with a low voice; "it is then true that the sin of the father shall fall on the children to the third and fourth generation."

Meanwhile Albert had revived; and continuing to read, he

threw back his hair upon his head moist with perspiration, and crushing in his hands the letter and paper, he said, " Florentin, is your horse fit to return immediately? "

" It is a poor lame post-horse."

" In what state was the house when you left? "

" All was quiet; but on returning from M. Beauchamp's, I found madame in tears. She had sent for me to know when you would return. I told her that I was going for you, by direction of M. Beauchamp; she first extended her arms to prevent me, but after a moment's reflection, ' Yes, go, Florentin,' said she, ' and let him return.' "

" Yes, my mother," said Albert, " I will return, and woe to the infamous wretch! But first I must take leave—"

He returned to the room where he had left Monte Cristo. He was no longer the same man; five minutes had wrought a sad change in him. He had gone out in his usual condition, but returned with a trembling voice, a feverish look, a threatening eye, and a tottering step. " Count," said he, " I thank you for your hospitality, which I would gladly have enjoyed longer, but I must return to Paris."

" What has happened? "

" A great misfortune, more important to me than life. Question me not, I pray you, but lend me a horse."

" My stables are at your command, viscount; but you will kill yourself by riding on horseback. Take a post-chaise or a carriage."

" No, it would delay me, and I need that fatigue which you fear for me; it will do me good."

Albert took a few steps, turning round like a man hit by a bullet, and fell on a chair near the door. Monte Cristo did not observe this second weakness; he was at the window, calling, " Ali, a horse for M. de Morcerf! quick, he is in a hurry! "

These words restored Albert; he darted from the room, followed by the count. " Thank you! " cried he, throwing himself into the saddle. " Return as soon as you can, Florentin. Must I use any pass-word to procure a horse? "

" Only dismount from the horse you ride; another will be immediately saddled."

Albert hesitated a moment. " You will think my departure strange and foolish," said the young man. " You do not know how a few lines in a newspaper may plunge a man into despair. Well," he added, throwing down to him the paper, " read this, but only after I have gone, that you may not witness my shame."

While the count picked up the paper, Albert put spurs to his horse, and started with the rapidity of an arrow. The count watched him with a feeling of compassion, and when he had completely disappeared, read as follows:—

"The French officer in the service of Ali, Pacha of Janina, alluded to three weeks since in *L'Impartial*, who not only surrendered the castle of Janina, but sold his benefactor to the Turks, styled himself truly at that time Fernand, as our honourable brother states; but he has since added to his Christian name a title of nobility and a family name. He now calls himself the Comte de Morcerf, and has a seat in the Chamber of Peers."

Thus this terrible secret, which Beauchamp had so generously destroyed, appeared again as an armed phantom; and another paper, cruelly informed, had published, two days after Albert's departure for Normandy, the few lines which had almost distracted the unfortunate young man.

CHAPTER LXXXVI

THE TRIAL

At eight o'clock in the morning Albert fell like a thunderbolt at Beauchamp's door. The *valet de chambre* had received orders to introduce him into his master's room, who was just then bathing. "Well?" said Albert.

"Well, my poor friend," replied Beauchamp, "I expected you."

"Here I am. I will not tell you, Beauchamp, that I think you are too faithful and too kind to have spoken of that to any one,—no, my friend. Besides, your having sent for me is a proof of your affection. So, without losing time, tell me, have you the slightest idea whence this terrible blow proceeds?"

"I will tell you at once in two words."

"But first tell me all the particulars of this shameful plot."

Beauchamp proceeded to relate to the young man, overwhelmed with shame and grief, the following facts: Two days previously, the article had appeared in another paper, *L'Impartial*, and what was more serious, one that was well known as a government organ. Beauchamp was breakfasting when he read the passage; he sent immediately for a cabriolet, and without finishing his breakfast, hastened to the publisher's office. Although professing principles diametrically opposite to those of the editor of the accusing paper, Beauchamp, as it sometimes, we may say often happens, was his intimate friend.

The editor was reading with apparent delight a leading article in the same paper, on beet-root sugar, probably a composition of his own.

"Ah, *pardieu !*" said Beauchamp, "with the paper in your hand, my friend, I need not tell you the cause of my visit."

"Are you, perchance, concerned in the sugar question?" asked the editor of the ministerial paper.

"No," replied Beauchamp, "I have not considered the question; a totally different subject interests me."

"What is it?"

"The article relative to Morcerf."

"Indeed! Is it not a curious affair?"

"So curious that I think you are running a great risk of a prosecution for defamation of character."

"Not at all; we have received with the information all the requisite proofs, and we are quite sure that M. de Morcerf will not raise his voice against us. Besides, it is rendering a service to one's country to denounce those wretched criminals who are unworthy of the honour bestowed on them."

Beauchamp remained thunder-struck. "Who, then, has so correctly informed you?" he asked. "For my paper, which had started the subject, has been obliged to stop for want of proof; and yet we are more interested than you in exposing M. de Morcerf, as he is a peer of France, and we are of the opposition."

"Oh! it is very simple. We have not run after the scandal; it came to us. A man arrived yesterday from Janina, bringing the formidable bundle; and as we hesitated to publish the accusatory article he told us that upon our refusal the article would appear in some other paper."

Beauchamp understood that nothing remained but to submit, and left the office to despatch a courier to Morcerf. But he had been unable to send to Albert information of the following events, which had occurred after the messenger's departure: On that day a great agitation was manifest in the Chamber of Peers among the usually calm groups of the noble assembly. Every one had arrived almost before the usual hour, and was conversing on the ominous event which would occupy public attention and fix it upon one of the best known members of the illustrious body. Some were perusing the article, others making comments and recalling circumstances which gave precision to the charges. The count was no favourite with his colleagues. Like all parvenus, he had been driven to an excess of arrogance to maintain his position. The old aristocracy

laughed at him; the men of talent repelled him; and the honourable instinctively despised him. The count was in the wretched situation of a sacrificial victim. Once designated for the sacrifice by the finger of God, every one was ready to cry out at him.

The Comte de Morcerf alone was ignorant of what was occurring. He did not take the paper containing the defamatory news, and had passed the morning in writing letters and in trying a horse. He arrived therefore at his usual hour, with an arrogant look and insolent demeanour; he alighted, passed through the corridors, and entered the house without observing the hesitation of the doorkeepers or the coolness of his colleagues. The session had been opened half an hour before his arrival. Although the count—ignorant, as we have said, of all that was taking place—showed no change in his manner and bearing, his manner and bearing seemed to all more presumptuous than usual; and his presence on the occasion appeared so aggressive to that assembly, jealous of its honour, that all regarded it as an impropriety, many as a defiance, and some as an insult. Evidently, the entire Chamber was eager to begin the debate. Every one held the accusing paper; but as usual no one liked to take upon himself the responsibility of the attack. At length an honourable peer, Morcerf's acknowledged enemy, ascended the tribune with that solemnity which announced that the expected moment had arrived. There was an imposing silence; Morcerf alone knew not why such profound attention was given to an orator who was not always listened to with so much complacency. The count paid no special attention to the introduction, in which the speaker announced that his communication would be of so vital importance that it demanded the undivided attention of the House; but at the names Janina and Colonel Fernand he turned so horribly pale that every member shuddered and fixed his eyes upon him. Moral wounds have this peculiarity,—they conceal themselves but never close; always painful, always ready to bleed when touched, they remain fresh and open in the heart.

The article having been read during this painful silence, disturbed only by a universal shudder, which ceased immediately when the orator resumed, he stated his scruples and the difficulties of the case. It was the honour of M. de Morcerf, and that of the whole House, which he proposed to defend, by provoking a debate on those personal questions always so warmly agitated. He concluded by calling for an examination, which might confound the calumnious report before it had time to

spread, and restore M. de Morcerf to the position he had long held in public opinion.

Morcerf was so overwhelmed by this great and unexpected calamity that he could scarcely stammer a few words as he looked round on the assembly with a bewildered expression. This timidity, which might proceed from the astonishment of innocence as well as the shame of guilt, conciliated some in his favour,—for men who are truly generous are always ready to compassionate when the misfortune of their enemy surpasses the extent of their hatred. The president put it to vote; and it was decided that the examination should take place. The count was asked what time he required to prepare his defence. Morcerf's courage had revived when he found himself still living after this terrible blow. "My lords," he answered, "it is not by time I could repel the attack made on me by enemies unknown to me, and doubtless hidden in obscurity; it is immediately, and by a thunderbolt, that I must reply to the flash of lightning which for a moment startled me. Oh! that I could, instead of taking up this defence, shed my last drop of blood to prove to my noble colleagues that I am their equal in worth!" These words made a favourable impression on behalf of the accused. "I demand, then, that the examination shall take place as soon as possible, and I will furnish the House with all necessary information."

"What day do you fix?" asked the president.

"From to-day I am at the disposition of the Chamber," replied the count.

The president rang the bell. "Is the Chamber of opinion that the examination should take place to-day?"

"Yes!" was the unanimous answer.

A committee of twelve members was chosen to examine the evidence to be brought forward by Morcerf. The examination would begin at eight o'clock that evening in the committee-room; and if it were necessary to adjourn it, it would be resumed each evening at the same hour. Morcerf asked leave to retire; he had to collect the documents he had long been preparing against this storm, which his sagacity had foreseen.

Beauchamp related to the young man all the details which we in our turn have now related; but his recital had, over ours, the advantage of the animation of what is living over the coldness of what is dead. Albert listened, trembling now with hope, then with anger, and then again with shame,—for from Beauchamp's confidences he knew that his father was guilty; and he asked himself how, since he was guilty, he could

prove his innocence. Beauchamp hesitated to continue his narrative.

"What next?" asked Albert.

"What next? My friend, you impose a painful task on me. Must you know all?"

"Absolutely; and rather from your lips than another's."

"Prepare your courage, then; for never will you have required it more."

Albert passed his hand over his forehead, as if to try his strength, as a man who is preparing to defend his life proves his shield and bends his sword. He thought himself strong enough, for he mistook fever for energy. "Proceed," said he.

"The evening arrived," continued Beauchamp; "all Paris was in expectation. Many said that your father had only to show himself to confound the charge; many others said he would not appear; while some asserted that they had seen him start for Brussels, and others went to the police-office to inquire if he had taken out a passport. I used all my influence with one of the committee, a young peer of my acquaintance, to get introduced into a sort of gallery. He called for me at seven o'clock, and before any one had arrived, asked one of the doorkeepers to place me in a box. I was concealed by a column, and might hope to witness the whole of the terrible scene which was about to take place. At eight o'clock all were in their places, and M. de Morcerf entered at the last stroke. He held some papers in his hand; his countenance was calm, his step firm, and his dress handsome without ostentation. According to the ancient military costume, his coat was buttoned completely up to the chin. His presence produced a good effect. His committee was composed of liberal men, several of whom came forward to shake hands with him."

Albert felt his heart bursting at these particulars; but gratitude mingled with his sorrow. He would gladly have embraced those who had given his father this proof of esteem at a moment when his honour was so powerfully attacked.

"At this moment one of the doorkeepers brought in a letter for the president. 'You have the floor, M. de Morcerf,' said the president, as he unsealed the letter; and the count began his defence, I assure you, Albert, in a most eloquent and skilful manner. He produced documents proving that the Vizier of Janina had to the last moment honoured him with his entire confidence, since he had intrusted him with a negotiation of life and death with the emperor. He produced the ring, his mark of authority, with which Ali Pacha generally sealed his letters,

and which the latter had given him that he might, on his return at any hour of the day or night, even in his harem gain access to him. Unfortunately, he said, the negotiation failed; and when he returned to defend his benefactor, he was dead. 'But,' said the count, 'so great was Ali Pacha's confidence that on his death-bed he intrusted his favourite mistress and her daughter to my care.' "

Albert started on hearing these words. The history of Haydée recurred to him; and he remembered what she had said of that message and the ring, and the manner in which she had been sold and made a slave. "And what effect did this discourse produce?" he anxiously inquired.

"I acknowledge it affected me, and indeed all the committee also," said Beauchamp. "Meanwhile, the president carelessly looked over the letter which had been brought to him; but the first lines aroused his attention. He read them again and again; and fixing his eyes on M. de Morcerf, 'Monsieur the Count,' said he, 'you have said the Vizier of Janina had confided his wife and daughter to your care?' 'Yes, monsieur,' replied Morcerf, 'but in that, like all the rest, misfortune pursued me; on my return, Vasiliki and her daughter Haydée had disappeared.' 'Did you know them?' 'My intimacy with the pacha and his unlimited confidence in my fidelity had given me opportunities to see them more than twenty times.' 'Have you any idea what became of them?' 'Yes, monsieur; I heard they had fallen victims to their sorrow, and perhaps to their poverty. I was not rich; my life was in constant danger. I could not seek them, to my great regret.' The president frowned imperceptibly. 'Gentlemen,' said he, 'you have heard M. le Comte de Morcerf's explanations. Can you, Monsieur the Count, produce any witnesses to the truth of what you have asserted?' 'Alas! no, monsieur,' replied the count; 'all those who surrounded the vizier, or who knew me at his court, are either dead or scattered. Alone, I believe, of all my countrymen, I survived that dreadful war. I have only the letters of Ali Tebelin, which I have placed before you; the ring, a token of his good-will, which is here; and lastly, the most convincing proof I can offer, namely, after an anonymous attack, the absence of all witness against my veracity and the purity of my military life.' A murmur of approbation ran through the assembly; and at this moment, Albert, had nothing more occurred, your father's cause had been gained. It only remained to put it to the vote, when the president resumed: 'Gentlemen, and you, Monsieur the Count, you will not be displeased, I presume, to listen to one

who calls himself a very important witness, and who has just presented himself. This witness—we cannot doubt after what the count has said—has come to prove the perfect innocence of our colleague. Here is a letter which I have just received on the subject; shall it be read, or shall we pass it by, and not regard this incident?' M. de Morcerf turned pale and clinched his hands on the papers he held. The committee decided to hear the letter; the count was thoughtful and silent. The president read:—

"MONSIEUR THE PRESIDENT,—I can furnish the committee of inquiry into the conduct of Lieutenant-Général Comte de Morcerf in Epirus and in Macedonia with very definite information.

"The president paused, and the count turned pale. The president looked at his auditors. 'Proceed,' was heard on all sides. The president resumed:—

"I was on the spot at the death of Ali Pacha; I was present during his last moments; I know what became of Vasiliki and Haydée. I am at the command of the committee, and even claim the honour of being heard. I shall be in the lobby when this note is delivered to you.

"'And who is this witness, or rather this enemy?' asked the count, in a tone in which there was a visible alteration. 'We shall know, monsieur,' replied the president. 'Is the committee willing to hear this witness?' 'Yes, yes,' said they all at once. The doorkeeper was called. 'Is there any one in the lobby?' said the president. 'Yes, monsieur.' 'Who is it?' 'A woman, accompanied by a servant.' Every one looked at his neighbour. 'Introduce the woman,' said the president. Five minutes after, the doorkeeper again appeared. All eyes were fixed on the door; and even I," said Beauchamp, "shared the general expectation and anxiety. Behind the doorkeeper walked a woman enveloped in a large veil, which completely concealed her. It was evident from her figure and the perfumes she had about her that this was a young and elegant woman; but that was all. The president requested her to throw aside her veil, and it was then seen that she was dressed in the Grecian costume, and was remarkably beautiful."

"Ah!" said Albert, "it was she."

"She? who?"

"Haydée."

"Who told you that?"

"Alas! I see it. But go on, Beauchamp. You see I am calm and strong; and yet we must be drawing near the climax."

"'M. de Morcerf," continued Beauchamp, "looked at this woman with surprise and terror. Her lips were about to pass his sentence of life or death. To all the committee the adventure was so extraordinary and curious that the interest they had felt for the count's safety became now quite a secondary matter. The president himself advanced to place a seat for the young lady; but she declined availing herself of it. As for the count, he had fallen on his chair; it was evident that his legs refused to support him.

"'Madame,' said the president, 'you have engaged to furnish the committee with information respecting the affair at Janina, and you have stated that you were an eye-witness of the events.' 'I was indeed!' said the stranger, with a tone of sweet melancholy, and with the sonorous voice peculiar to the East. 'But allow me to say you must have been very young then.' 'I was four years old; but as those events deeply concerned me, not a single particular has escaped my memory.' 'In what manner could those events concern you; and who are you, that they should have made so deep an impression on you?' 'On them depended my father's life,' replied she. 'I am Haydée, the daughter of Ali Tebelin, Pacha of Janina, and of Vasiliki, his beloved wife.'

"The blush of mingled pride and modesty which suddenly suffused the cheeks of the young woman, the brilliancy of her eye, and her highly important communication, produced an inexpressible effect on the assembly. As for the count, he could not have been more overwhelmed if a thunderbolt had fallen at his feet and opened before him an abyss. 'Madame,' replied the president, bowing with profound respect, 'allow me to ask one question,—it shall be the last: Can you prove the truth of what you have now stated?' 'I can, monsieur,' said Haydée, drawing from under her veil a satin satchel highly perfumed; 'for here is the certificate of my birth, written by my father and signed by his principal officers, and that of my baptism, my father having consented to my being brought up in my mother's faith. This latter has been sealed by the grand primate of Macedonia and Epirus; and lastly (and this is doubtless of most importance), the certificate of the sale of my person and that of my mother to the Armenian merchant El-Kobbir, by the French officer who in his infamous bargain with the Porte had reserved as his part of the booty the wife and daughter of his benefactor, whom he sold for about four hundred thousand livres.' A greenish paleness spread over the count's cheeks, and his eyes became bloodshot at these terrible

imputations, which were listened to by the assembly with an ill-foreboding silence.

"Haydée, still calm, but more threatening in her tranquillity than another would have been in anger, handed to the president the certificate of her sale, written in Arabic. It had been supposed that some of these papers might be written in the Arabian, Romaic, or Turkish languages, and the interpreter of the Chamber was in attendance. One of the noble peers who was familiar with the Arabian language, having studied it during the sublime Egyptian campaign, followed with his eye as the translator read aloud:—

"I, El-Kobbir, a slave-merchant, and furnisher of the harem of his Highness, acknowledge having received for transmission to the sublime emperor from the French lord, Count of Monte Cristo, an emerald valued at eight hundred thousand livres, as the ransom of a young Christian slave of eleven years of age, named Haydée, the acknowledged daughter of the late Lord Ali Tebelin, Pacha of Janina, and of Vasiliki, his favourite,—she having been sold to me seven years previously, with her mother, who died on arriving at Constantinople, by a French colonel in the service of the Vizier Ali Tebelin, named Fernand Mondego. The above-mentioned purchase was made on his Highness's account, whose mandate I had, for the sum of four hundred thousand livres.

"Given at Constantinople, by authority of his Highness, in the year 1247 of the Hegira.—Signed El-Kobbir.

"That this record should have all due authority, it shall bear the imperial seal which the vendor is bound to have affixed to it.

"Near the merchant's signature there was indeed the seal of the sublime emperor. A terrible silence succeeded the reading of this paper. The count could only look; and his gaze, fixed as if unconsciously on Haydée, seemed one of fire and blood. 'Madame,' said the president, 'may inquiries be made of the Count of Monte Cristo, who is now, I believe, in Paris?' 'Monsieur,' replied Haydée, 'the Count of Monte Cristo, my other father, has been in Normandy the last three days.' 'Who, then, has counselled you to take this step,—one for which the court is deeply indebted to you, and which is perfectly natural, considering your birth and your misfortunes?' 'Monsieur,' replied Haydée, 'I have been led to take this step by my self-respect and by my sorrow. Although a Christian, may God forgive me! I have always sought to revenge my illustrious father. Since I set my foot in France, and knew the traitor lived in Paris, I have watched carefully. I live retired in the house of my noble protector; but I do it from choice. I prefer retirement and silence, because I can live with my thoughts and

recollections of past days. But M. le Comte de Monte Cristo surrounds me with paternal care; and I am ignorant of nothing which takes place in the world, though I hold it all at a distance. Thus I see all the newspapers, every periodical, as well as every new melody. And in thus watching the course of the life of others, I learned what had occurred this morning in the Chamber of Peers, and what was to take place this evening; then I wrote.' 'Then,' remarked the president, 'the Count of Monte Cristo knows nothing of your present proceedings?' 'He is quite unaware of them; and I have but one fear, which is that he should disapprove of what I have done. But it is a glorious day for me,' continued the young girl, raising her ardent gaze to heaven, 'that on which I find at last an opportunity to avenge my father!'

"The count had not uttered one word during all this time. His colleagues looked at him and doubtless felt some compassion for that fortune broken by the perfumed breath of a woman. His misery was depicted by sinister lines on his countenance. 'M. de Morcerf,' said the president, 'do you recognise this lady as the daughter of Ali Tebelin, Pacha of Janina?' 'No,' said Morcerf, attempting to rise; 'it is a base plot, contrived by my enemies.' Haydée, whose eyes had been fixed upon the door, as if expecting some one, turned hastily, and seeing the count standing, uttered a terrible cry. 'You do not know me?' said she. 'Well, I fortunately recognise you! You are Fernand Mondego, the French officer who instructed the troops of my noble father! It is you who surrendered the castle of Janina! It is you who, sent by him to Constantinople to treat with the emperor for the life or death of your benefactor, brought back a false mandate granting full pardon! It is you who with that mandate obtained the pacha's ring, which gave you authority over Selim, the fire-keeper! It is you who stabbed Selim! It is you who sold us, my mother and me, to the merchant, El-Kobbir! Assassin! assassin! assassin! you have still on your brow your master's blood. Look, gentlemen, all!'

"These words had been pronounced with such power of truth that every eye was fixed on the count's forehead; and he himself passed his hand across it, as if he felt Ali's blood still moist upon it. 'You positively recognise M. de Morcerf as the officer, Fernand Mondego?' 'Indeed I do!' cried Haydée. 'Oh, my mother! it was you who said to me, "You were free; you had a beloved father; you were destined to be almost a queen. Look well at that man. It is he who has made you a slave; it is he who raised your father's head on the point of a spear;

it is he who has sold us; it is he who has delivered us to the purchaser! Look well at his right hand, on which he has a large scar, if you should forget his features, you would know him by that hand, into which fell, one by one, the golden pieces of the merchant El-Kobbir!" Do I know him? Ah! let him say now if he does not recognise me!' Every word fell like a dagger on Morcerf and deprived him of a portion of his energy; as she uttered the last, he hid hastily in his bosom his hand, which had indeed been mutilated by a wound, and fell back on his seat, engulfed by black despair. This scene had completely changed the opinion of the assembly respecting the accused count. 'M. le Comte de Morcerf,' said the president, 'do not allow yourself to be depressed; answer. The justice of the court is supreme and impartial as that of God; it will not suffer you to be trampled on by your enemies without giving you an opportunity of defending yourself. Shall further inquiries be made? Shall two members of the Chamber be sent to Janina? Speak!' Morcerf did not reply. Then all the members looked at each other with a sort of terror. They knew the count's energetic and violent temper; it must be indeed a dreadful blow which would deprive him of courage to defend himself. They expected that this silence, resembling a sleep, would be followed by an awakening like a thunderbolt. 'Well,' asked the president, 'what is your decision?' 'I have no reply to make,' said the count, in a low tone, and standing up. 'The daughter of Ali Tebelin has then spoken the truth?' said the president. 'She is, then, the terrible witness to whose charge you dare not plead "Not guilty"? You have really committed the crimes of which you are accused?' The count looked round him with an expression of despair which might have softened tigers, but which could not disarm his judges. Then he raised his eyes towards the ceiling, but withdrew them immediately, as if he feared the roof would open and reveal to his distressed view that second tribunal which is called heaven, and that other judge who is named God. Then with a hasty movement he tore open his coat, which seemed to stifle him, and flew from the room like a madman; his footstep was heard one moment in the corridor, then the rattling of his carriage-wheels as he was driven rapidly away. 'Gentlemen,' said the president, when silence was restored, 'is M. le Comte de Morcerf convicted of felony, treason, and outrage?' 'Yes,' replied all the members of the committee of inquiry, with a unanimous voice.

"Haydée had remained until the close of the meeting. She

heard the count's sentence pronounced without betraying an expression of joy or pity; then, drawing her veil over her face, she bowed majestically to the councillors, and left with that dignified step which Virgil attributes to his goddesses.

CHAPTER LXXXVII

THE CHALLENGE

"THEN," continued Beauchamp, "I took advantage of the silence and the darkness to leave the house without being seen. The doorkeeper who had introduced me was waiting for me at the door, and he conducted me through the corridors to a private entrance opening into the Rue de Vaugirard. I left with mingled feelings of sorrow and delight. Excuse me, Albert, sorrow on your account, and delight with that noble girl, thus pursuing paternal vengeance. Yes, Albert, from whatever source that revelation may have come, I say that though it comes from an enemy, that enemy is only the agent of Providence."

Albert held his head between his hands; he raised his face, red with shame, and bathed in tears, and seizing Beauchamp's arm, "My friend," said he, "my life is ended. I cannot calmly say with you, 'Providence has struck the blow;' but I must discover who pursues me with this hatred, and when I have found him, I will kill him, or he will kill me. I rely on your friendship to assist me, Beauchamp, if contempt has not banished it from your heart."

"Contempt, my friend! how does this misfortune concern you? No, happily that unjust prejudice is forgotten which made the son responsible for the father's actions. Review your life, Albert; although it is only just beginning, never did a day dawn with greater purity than has marked the commencement of your career. No, Albert, take my advice. You are young and rich; leave Paris. All is soon forgotten in the great Babylon of excited life and changing taste. You will return after three or four years with a Russian princess for a bride; and no one will think more of what occurred yesterday than if it had happened sixteen years ago."

"Thank you, my dear Beauchamp, thank you for the excellent feeling which prompts your advice; but it cannot be thus. I have told you my wish, or if it must be so, I will say determination. You understand that interested as I am in

this affair, I cannot see it in the same light as you do. What appears to you to emanate from a celestial source, seems to me to proceed from one far less pure. Providence appears to me to have no share in this affair; and happily so, for instead of the invisible, impalpable agent of celestial rewards and punishments, I shall find one both palpable and visible, on whom I shall revenge myself, I assure you, for all I have suffered during the last month. Now, I repeat, Beauchamp, I wish to return to human and material existence; and if you are still the friend you profess to be, help me to discover the hand that struck the blow."

"Be it so," said Beauchamp. "If you must have me descend to earth, I submit; and if you will seek your enemy, I will assist you, and I will engage to find him, my honour being almost as deeply interested as yours."

"Well, then, you understand, Beauchamp, that we begin our search immediately. Each moment's delay is an eternity for me. The calumniator is not yet punished, and he may hope he will not be; but on my honour, if he thinks so, he deceives himself."

"Well, listen, Morcerf."

"Ah, Beauchamp, I see you know something already; you restore me to life."

"I do not say there is any truth in what I am going to tell you; but it is at least as a light in a dark night; by following it we may perhaps discover something more certain."

"Tell me; satisfy my impatience."

"Well, I will tell you what I did not like to mention on my return from Janina."

"Say on."

"I went, of course, to the chief banker of the town to make inquiries. At the first word, before I had even mentioned your father's name, 'Ah, said he, 'I guess what brings you here.' 'How and why?' 'Because a fortnight since I was questioned on the same subject.' 'By whom?' 'By a banker of Paris, my correspondent.' 'Whose name is—' 'Danglars.'"

"He!" cried Albert; "Yes, it is indeed he who has so long pursued my father with jealous hatred. He, the man who would be popular, cannot forgive the Comte de Morcerf for being created a peer; and this marriage, broken off without a reason being assigned,—yes, it is all from the same cause."

"Inquire, Albert; but do not be angry without reason. Inquire; and if it is true—"

"Oh, yes, if it is true," cried the young man, "he shall pay me all I have suffered."

"Beware, Morcerf; he is already an old man."

"I will respect his age as he has respected the honour of my family. If my father had offended him, why did he not attack him personally? Oh, no, he was afraid to encounter a man face to face."

"I do not condemn you, Albert; I only restrain you. Act prudently."

"Oh, do not fear; besides, you will accompany me, Beauchamp. Solemn transactions should be sanctioned by a witness. Before this day closes, if M. Danglars is guilty, he shall cease to live, or I will die. *Pardieu!* Beauchamp, I will make a fine funeral in vindication of my honour."

"When such resolutions are made, Albert, they should be promptly executed. Do you wish to go to M. Danglars? Let us go immediately."

They sent for a cabriolet. On entering the banker's courtyard, they perceived the phaeton and servant of M. Andrea Cavalcanti at the door.

"Ah, *parbleu!* that's good," said Albert, in a gloomy tone. "If M. Danglars will not fight with me, I will kill his son-in-law; he ought to fight,—a Cavalcanti!"

The servant announced the young man; but the banker, recollecting what had happened the day before, ordered the door to be closed. It was, however, too late; Albert had followed the footman, and hearing the order given, forced the door open, and followed by Beauchamp, found himself in the banker's cabinet.

"Monsieur," cried the latter, "am I no longer at liberty to receive whom I choose in my house? You appear to forget yourself strangely."

"No, monsieur," said Albert, coldly; "there are circumstances in which one cannot, except through cowardice,—I offer you that refuge,—refuse to admit certain persons at least."

"What, then, do you desire of me, monsieur?"

"I desire," said Albert, approaching, without apparently noticing Cavalcanti, who stood with his back towards the fireplace,—"I desire to propose a meeting in some retired corner where no one will interrupt us for ten minutes; I ask you for no more than that,—where, two men having met, one of them will remain on the ground."

Danglars turned pale; Cavalcanti moved a step forward, and Albert turned towards him. "And you too," said he, "come, if you like, Monsieur the Count; you have a claim, being almost one of the family, and I will give as many

rendezvous of that kind as I can find persons willing to accept them."

Cavalcanti looked at Danglars with a stupefied air; and the latter, making an effort, rose and advanced between the two young people. Albert's attack on Andrea had placed him on a different footing; and he hoped this visit had another cause than that he had at first supposed.

"Indeed, monsieur," said he to Albert, "if you are come to quarrel with this gentleman because I have preferred him to you, I shall resign the case to the *procureur du roi*."

"You mistake, monsieur," said Morcerf, with a gloomy smile; "I am not alluding in the least to matrimony, and I only addressed myself to M. Cavalcanti because he appeared for an instant disposed to interfere between us. In one respect you are right, for I am ready to quarrel with every one to-day; but you have the first claim, M. Danglars."

"Monsieur," replied Danglars, pale with anger and fear, "I warn you, when I have the misfortune to meet with a mad dog, I kill it; and far from thinking myself guilty of a crime, I believe I do society a kindness. Now, if you are mad, and try to bite me, I will kill you without pity. Is it my fault that your father is dishonoured?"

"Yes, miserable wretch!" cried Morcerf, "it is your fault."

Danglars retreated a few steps. "My fault!" said he; "you must be mad! What do I know of the Grecian history? Have I travelled in that country? Did I advise your father to sell the castle of Janina, to betray—"

"Silence!" said Albert, with a muffled voice. "No; it is not you who have directly made this exposure and brought this sorrow on us, but you hypocritically provoked it."

"I?"

"Yes; you! Whence came that revelation?"

"Why, it seems to me the paper told you; from Janina, of course!"

"Who wrote to Janina?"

"To Janina?"

"Yes. Who wrote for information concerning my father?"

"I imagine any one may write to Janina."

"But one person only wrote!"

"One only?"

"Yes; and that was you!"

"I wrote certainly. It appears to me that when about to marry your daughter to a young man, it is right to make some inquiries respecting his family; it is not only a right, but a duty."

"You wrote, monsieur, knowing what answer you would receive."

"I, indeed! I assure you," cried Danglars, with a confidence and security proceeding less perhaps from fear than from the interest he really felt for the unhappy young man, "I solemnly declare to you that I should never have thought of writing to Janina. Did I know about the catastrophe of Ali Pacha,—I?"

"Then some one incited you to write?"

"Certainly."

"Who was that? Come, speak!"

"*Pardieu!* it was the most simple thing in the world. I was speaking of your father's past history. I said the origin of his fortune remained obscure. The person to whom I addressed my scruples asked me where your father had acquired his property? I answered, 'In Greece.' 'Then,' said he, 'very well! write to Janina.'"

"And who thus advised you?"

"No other than your friend, the Count of Monte Cristo."

"The Count of Monte Cristo told you to write to Janina?"

"Yes; and I wrote, and will show you my correspondence, if you like."

Albert and Beauchamp looked at each other. "Monsieur," said Beauchamp, who had not yet spoken, "you appear to accuse the count, who is absent from Paris at this moment and cannot justify himself."

"I accuse no one, monsieur," said Danglars; "I relate, and I will repeat before the count what I have said to you."

"Does the count know what answer you received?"

"Yes; I showed it to him."

"Did he know my father's Christian name was Fernand, and his family name Mondego?"

"Yes, I had told him that long since; and I did nothing more than any other would have done in my circumstances, and perhaps less. When, the day after the arrival of this answer, your father came, by the advice of Monte Cristo, to ask my daughter's hand for you, I decidedly refused him, but without any explanation or exposure. In short, why should I have any more to do with the affair? How did the honour or disgrace of M. de Morcerf affect me? It neither increased nor decreased my income."

Albert felt the colour mounting to his brow; there was no room for doubt. Danglars defended himself with the baseness, but at the same time with the assurance of a man who speaks the truth at least in part, if not wholly, not for conscience' sake, but through fear. Besides, what was Morcerf seeking?

It was not whether Danglars or Monte Cristo was more or less guilty; it was a man who would answer for the offence, whether trifling or serious; it was a man who would fight, and it was evident that Danglars would not fight. And in addition to this, everything forgotten or unperceived before, presented itself now to his recollection. Monte Cristo knew everything, as he had bought the daughter of Ali Pacha; and knowing everything, he had advised Danglars to write to Janina. The answer known, he had yielded to Albert's wish to be introduced to Haydée, and allowed the conversation to turn on the death of Ali, and had not opposed Haydée's recital (but having doubtless warned the young girl in a few Romaic words he spoke to her not to discover Morcerf's father). Besides, had he not begged of Morcerf not to mention his father's name before Haydée? Lastly, he had taken Albert to Normandy when he knew the final blow approached. There could be no doubt that all had been calculated and previously arranged; Monte Cristo then was in league with his father's enemies. Albert took Beauchamp aside, and communicated these ideas to him.

"You are right," said the latter. "M. Danglars has only been a secondary agent in this sad affair; and it is of M. de Monte Cristo that you must claim an explanation."

Albert turned. "Monsieur," said he to Danglars, "understand that I do not take a final leave of you; I must ascertain if your inculpations are just, and am going now to inquire of the Count of Monte Cristo." He bowed to the banker, and went out with Beauchamp, without appearing to notice Cavalcanti. Danglars accompanied him to the door, where he again assured Albert that no motive of personal hatred influenced him against the Comte de Morcerf.

CHAPTER LXXXVIII

THE INSULT

At the banker's door Beauchamp stopped Morcerf. "Listen," said he; "just now I told you it was of M. de Monte Cristo you must demand an explanation."

"Yes; and we are going to his house."

"Reflect, Morcerf, one moment before you go."

"On what shall I reflect?"

"On the importance of the step you are taking."

"Is it more serious than going to M. Danglars?"

"Yes; M. Danglars is a money-lover, and those who love

money, you know, think too much of what they risk to be easily induced to fight a duel. The other is, on the contrary, to all appearance a gentleman; but do you not apprehend that under the gentleman you may encounter the bravo?"

"I fear only one thing, and that is, to find a man who will not fight."

"Oh, do not be alarmed!" said Beauchamp, "he will fight. My only fear is that he will be too strong for you."

"My friend," said Morcerf, with a sweet smile, "that is what I wish. The best thing that could happen to me would be to die for my father; that would save us all."

"Your mother would die of grief."

"My poor mother!" said Albert, passing his hand across his eyes, "I know she would; but better so than die of shame."

"Are you quite decided, Albert?"

"Yes; let us go."

"But do you think we shall find the count at home?"

"He intended returning some hours after me; and doubtless he is now at home."

They ordered the driver to take them to No. 30 Champs Elysées. Beauchamp wished to go in alone; but Albert observed that as this was an unusual circumstance, he might be allowed to deviate from the etiquette of duels. The cause which the young man espoused was one so sacred that Beauchamp could only comply with all his wishes; he yielded, and contented himself with following Morcerf. Albert bounded from the porter's lodge to the steps. He was received by Baptistin. The count had indeed just arrived, but he was bathing, and had forbidden that any one should be admitted.

"But after his bath?" asked Morcerf.

"My master will go to dinner."

"And after dinner?"

"He will sleep an hour."

"Then?"

"He is going to the opera."

"Are you sure of it?" asked Albert.

"Quite sure; Monsieur has ordered his horses at eight o'clock precisely."

"Very good," replied Albert; "that is all I wished to know." Then, turning towards Beauchamp, "If you have anything to attend to, Beauchamp, do it directly; if you have any appointment for this evening, defer it till to-morrow. I depend on you to accompany me to the opera; and if you can, bring Château-Renaud with you."

Beauchamp availed himself of Albert's permission, and left him, promising to call for him at a quarter before eight. On his return home, Albert conveyed his wish to Franz, Debray, and Morrel, to see them at the opera that evening. Then he went to see his mother, who since the events of the day before had refused to see any one and had kept her room. He found her in bed, overwhelmed with grief at this public humiliation. The sight of Albert produced the effect which might naturally be expected on Mercédès. She pressed her son's hand and sobbed aloud; but her tears relieved her. Albert stood one moment speechless by the side of his mother's bed. It was evident, from his pale face and knit brows, that his resolution to revenge himself was growing weaker. "My dear mother," said he, "do you know if M. de Morcerf has any enemy?"

Mercédès started; she noticed that the young man did not say "my father." "My son," she said, "persons in the count's situation have many secret enemies. Those who are known are not the most dangerous."

"I know it, and appeal to your penetration. You are of so superior a mind that nothing escapes you."

"Why do you say that?"

"Because, for instance, you noticed on the evening of the ball we gave that M. de Monte Cristo would eat nothing in our house."

Mercédès raised herself on her feverish arm. "M. de Monte Cristo!" she exclaimed; "and how is he connected with the question you asked me?"

"You know, my mother, that M. de Monte Cristo is almost an Oriental; and it is customary with them to retain full liberty of revenge by not eating or drinking in the house of their enemies."

"Do you say that M. de Monte Cristo is our enemy?" replied Mercédès, becoming paler than the sheet which covered her. "Who told you so? Why, are you mad, Albert! M. de Monte Cristo has only shown us kindness. M. de Monte Cristo saved your life; you yourself presented him to us. Oh, I entreat you, my son, if you had entertained such an idea, dispel it; and my counsel to you,—even more, my prayer is, retain his friendship."

"My mother," replied the young man, "you have special reason for telling me to conciliate that man."

"I?" said Mercédès, blushing as rapidly as she had turned pale, and again becoming paler than ever.

"Yes, doubtless; and that reason is," said Albert,—"is it not?—that this man may do us harm?"

Mercédès shuddered, and fixing on her son a scrutinising gaze, "You speak strangely," said she to Albert, "and you appear to have some singular prejudices. What has the count done? Three days since you were with him in Normandy; only three days since we looked on him as our best friend."

An ironical smile passed over Albert's lips. Mercédès saw it; and with her double instinct of a woman and a mother, she divined all, but prudent and strong-minded, she concealed both her sorrows and her fears. Albert was silent; an instant after, the countess resumed, "You came to inquire after my health; I will candidly acknowledge I am not well. You should install yourself here and cheer my solitude. I do not wish to be left alone."

"My mother," said the young man, "you know how gladly I would obey your wish; but an urgent and important affair obliges me to leave you the whole evening."

"Well!" replied Mercédès, sighing; "go, Albert, I will not make you a slave to your filial piety."

Albert pretended he did not hear, bowed to his mother, and left her. Scarcely had he shut her door when Mercédès called a confidential servant, and ordered him to follow Albert wherever he should go that evening, and to come and tell her immediately what he observed. Then she rang for her lady's-maid, and weak as she was, she dressed, in order to be ready for whatever might happen.

The footman's mission was an easy one. Albert went to his room and dressed with unusual care. At ten minutes to eight Beauchamp arrived; he had seen Château-Renaud, who had promised to be in the orchestra before the curtain was raised. Both got into Albert's coupé, who, having no reason to conceal where he was going, called aloud, "To the opera." In his impatience, he arrived before the curtain rose.

Château-Renaud was at his post; apprised by Beauchamp of the circumstances, he required no explanation from Albert. The conduct of this son, seeking to avenge his father, was so natural that Château-Renaud did not seek to dissuade him, and was content with renewing his assurances of devotedness to Albert. Debray had not yet come, but Albert knew that he seldom lost a scene at the opera. Albert wandered about the theatre until the curtain was drawn up. He hoped to meet M. de Monte Cristo either in the lobby or on the stairs. The bell summoned him to his seat, and he entered the orchestra with Château-Renaud and Beauchamp; but his eyes scarcely quitted the box between the columns, which remained obstin-

ately closed during the whole of the first act. At last, as Albert was looking at his watch about the hundredth time, at the beginning of the second act the door opened, and Monte Cristo, dressed in black, entered, and leaning over the front of the box, looked round the pit. Morrel followed him, and looked also for his sister and brother-in-law; he soon discovered them in another box, and kissed his hand to them.

The count in his survey of the pit encountered a pale face and threatening eyes, which evidently sought to gain his attention. He recognised Albert, but thought it better not to notice him, as he looked so angry and discomposed. Without making any movement which should betray his thought, he sat down, drew out his opera-glass, and looked another way. Although apparently not noticing Albert, he did not however lose sight of him; and when the curtain fell at the end of the second act, he saw him leave the orchestra with his two friends. Then his head was seen passing at the back of the boxes, and the count knew the approaching storm was intended to fall on him. He was at the moment conversing cheerfully with Morrel, but he was well prepared for what might happen. The door opened, and Monte Cristo, turning round, saw Albert, pale and trembling, followed by Beauchamp and Château-Renaud.

"Well," cried he, with that benevolent politeness which distinguished his salutation from the common civilities of the world, "my cavalier has reached his goal. Good-evening, M. de Morcerf." The countenance of this man, who possessed such extraordinary control over his feelings, expressed the most perfect cordiality. Morrel only then recollected the letter he had received from the viscount, in which, without assigning any reason, he begged him to go to the opera; but he understood that something terrible was brooding.

"We have not come here, monsieur, to exchange hypocritical expressions of politeness, or false professions of friendship," said Albert; "we have come to demand of you an explanation, Monsieur the Count." The trembling voice of the young man was scarcely audible.

"An explanation at the opera?" said the count, with that calm tone and penetrating eye which characterises the man who is always sure of himself. "Little acquainted as I am with the habits of Parisians, I should not have thought this the place for such a demand."

"Still, if people will shut themselves up," said Albert, "and cannot be seen because they are bathing, dining, or asleep, we must address them where we meet them."

"I am not difficult to find, monsieur; for yesterday, if my memory does not deceive me, you were at my house."

"Yesterday, I was at your house, monsieur," said the young man; "because then I knew not who you were." In pronouncing these words, Albert had raised his voice so as to be heard by those in the adjoining boxes and in the lobby. Thus the attention of many was attracted to this altercation.

"Where have you come from, monsieur?" said Monte Cristo, without the least apparent emotion. "You do not appear to be in the possession of your senses."

"Provided I understand your perfidy, monsieur, and succeed in making you understand that I will be revenged, I shall be reasonable enough," said Albert, furiously.

"I do not understand you, monsieur," replied Monte Cristo; "and if I did, your tone is too high. I am at home here, and I alone have a right to raise my voice above another's. Leave the box, monsieur!" Monte Cristo pointed towards the door with the most commanding dignity.

"Ah, I shall know how to make you leave your home!" replied Albert, clasping in his convulsed grasp his glove, which Monte Cristo did not lose sight of.

"Well, well!" said Monte Cristo, quietly, "I see you wish to quarrel with me; but I would give you one counsel, and do not forget it. It is a bad habit to make a display of a challenge. Display is not becoming to every one, M. de Morcerf."

At this name a murmur of astonishment passed like a shudder among the spectators of this scene. They had talked of no one but Morcerf the whole day. Albert understood the allusion in a moment, and was about to throw this glove at the count, when Morrel seized his hand, while Beauchamp and Château-Renaud, fearing the scene would surpass the limits of a challenge, held him back. But Monte Cristo, without rising, and leaning forward in his chair, merely extended his hand, and taking the damp, crushed glove from the clinched hand of the young man, "Monsieur," said he, in a solemn tone, "I consider your glove thrown, and will return it to you round a bullet. Now leave me, or I will summon my servants to throw you out at the door."

Wild, almost unconscious, and with eyes inflamed, Albert stepped back, and Morrel closed the door. Monte Cristo took up his glass again as if nothing had happened; he had a heart of bronze and a face of marble. Morrel whispered, "What have you done to him?"

"I? Nothing,—at least personally," said Monte Cristo.

"But there must be some cause for this strange scene."

"The Comte de Morcerf's adventure exasperates the unhappy young man."

"Have you anything to do with it?"

"It was by Haydée that the Chamber was informed of his father's treason."

"Indeed!" said Morrel. "I had been told, but would not credit it, that the Greek slave I have seen with you here in this very box was the daughter of Ali Pacha."

"It is true, nevertheless."

"Then," said Morrel, "I understand it all, and this scene was premeditated."

"How so?"

"Yes. Albert wrote to request me to come to the opera, doubtless that I might be a witness to the insult he meant to offer you."

"Probably," said Monte Cristo, with his imperturbable tranquillity.

"But what will you do with him?"

"With whom?"

"With Albert."

"What will I do with Albert? As certainly, Maximilian, as I now press your hand, I will kill him before ten o'clock to-morrow morning. That is what I will do with him." Morrel, in his turn, took Monte Cristo's hand in both of his, and he shuddered to feel how cold and steady it was.

"Ah, count," said he, "his father loves him so much!"

"Do not speak to me of that!" said Monte Cristo, with the first movement of anger he had betrayed; "I will make him suffer."

Morrel, amazed, let fall Monte Cristo's hand. "Count! count!" said he.

"Dear Maximilian," interrupted the count, "listen how adorably Duprez is singing that line,—

'O Mathilde! idole de mon âme!'

I was the first to discover Duprez at Naples, and the first to applaud him. Bravo! bravo!"

Morrel saw that it was useless to say more, and refrained. The curtain, which had been drawn up during the scene with Albert, again fell; and a rap was heard at the door.

"Come in!" said Monte Cristo, without his voice betraying the least emotion; and immediately Beauchamp appeared. "Good-evening, M. Beauchamp," said Monte Cristo, as if this

was the first time he had seen the journalist that evening; "take a seat."

Beauchamp bowed, and sitting down, "Monsieur," said he, "I just now accompanied M. de Morcerf, as you saw."

"And that means," replied Monte Cristo, laughing, "that you had probably just dined together. I am happy to see, M. Beauchamp, that you are more sober than he was."

"Monsieur," said M. Beauchamp, "Albert was wrong, I acknowledge, to betray so much anger; and I come, on my own account, to apologise. And having done so, on my own account only, you understand, Monsieur the Count, I would add that I believe you too honourable to refuse giving me some explanation concerning your connection with Janina. Then I will add two words about the young Greek girl."

Monte Cristo motioned him to be silent. "Come," said he, laughing, "there are all my hopes destroyed."

"How so?" asked Beauchamp.

"Certainly you wish to make me appear a very eccentric character; I am, in your opinion, a Lara, a Manfred, a Lord Ruthven. Then, just as I am arriving at the climax, you spoil your type, and seek to make a common man of me. You try to bring me down to the vulgar level; in short, you demand explanations! Indeed, M. Beauchamp, it is quite laughable."

"Yet," replied Beauchamp, haughtily, "there are occasions when probity commands—"

"M. Beauchamp," interposed this strange man, "the Count of Monte Cristo is commanded only by the Count of Monte Cristo. So, then, not a word on that subject, if you please. I do what I wish to do, M. Beauchamp, and it is always well done."

"Monsieur," replied the young man, "honest men are not to be paid with such coin. Honour demands guarantees."

"I am, monsieur, a living guarantee," replied Monte Cristo, motionless, but with a threatening look; "we have both blood in our veins which we wish to shed,—that is our mutual guarantee. Tell the viscount so, and that to-morrow, before ten o'clock, I shall see of what colour his is."

"Then I have only to make arrangements for the duel," said Beauchamp.

"It is quite immaterial to me, monsieur," said Monte Cristo; "and it was very unnecessary to disturb me at the opera for such a trifle. In France people fight with the sword or pistol, in the colonies with the carbine, in Arabia with the dagger. Tell your client that although I am the insulted party, in order

to sustain my eccentricity I leave him the choice of arms, and will accept without discussion, without dispute, anything, even combat by drawing lots, which is always stupid, but with me different from other people, as I am sure to gain."

"Sure to gain!" repeated Beauchamp, looking with amazement at the count.

"Certainly," said Monte Cristo, slightly shrugging his shoulders, "otherwise I would not fight with M. de Morcerf. I shall kill him; I cannot help it. Only by a single line this evening at my house, let me know the arms and the hour; I do not like to be kept waiting."

"Pistols, then, at eight o'clock, in the Bois de Vincennes," said Beauchamp, quite disconcerted, not knowing whether he was dealing with an arrogant braggart or a supernatural being.

"Very well, monsieur," said Monte Cristo. "Now that all is settled, do let me see the performance, and tell your friend Albert not to come any more this evening; he will hurt himself with all his rude barbarisms. Let him go home and go to sleep." Beauchamp left the box, amazed. "Now," said Monte Cristo, turning towards Morrel, "I may depend upon you, may I not?"

"Certainly," said Morrel, "I am at your service, count; still—"

"What?"

"It is desirable that I should know the real cause."

"That is to say, you refuse me?"

"No."

"The true cause? Morrel, the young man himself is acting blindfolded, and knows not the true cause, which is known only to God and to me; but I give you my word, Morrel, that God, who does know it, will be on our side."

"Enough," said Morrel, "who is your second witness?"

"I know no one in Paris, Morrel, on whom I could confer that honour besides you and your brother Emmanuel. Do you think Emmanuel would oblige me?"

"I will answer for him, count."

"Well, that is all I require. To-morrow morning, at seven o'clock, you will be with me, will you not?"

"We will."

"Hush! the curtain is rising. Listen! I never lose a note of this opera if I can avoid it; the music of 'William Tell' is adorable!"

CHAPTER LXXXIX

THE NIGHT

M. de Monte Cristo waited, according to his usual custom, until Duprez had sung his famous " Suivez-moi ; " then he rose, and went out. Morrel took leave of him at the door, renewing his promise to be with him the next morning at seven o'clock, and to bring Emmanuel with him. Then the count stepped into his coupé, calm and smiling, and was at home in five minutes. No one who knew him could mistake his expression, when, on entering, he said, " Ali, bring me my pistols with an ivory cross."

Ali brought the box to his master, who examined his arms with a solicitude very natural to a man who is about to intrust his life to a little iron and lead. These were select pistols, which Monto Cristo had had made to shoot at a target in his room. A cap was sufficient to drive out the ball ; and from the adjoining room no one would have suspected that the count was, as sportsmen would say, keeping his hand in. He was just taking one in his hand, and looking for the point to aim at on a little iron plate which served him as a target, when his cabinet-door opened and Baptistin entered. Before he had spoken a word, the count perceived in the doorway—the door remaining open—a woman, veiled, who had followed closely after Baptistin. Seeing the count with a pistol in his hand, and swords on the table, she rushed in. Baptistin looked at his master, who made a sign to him, and he went out, closing the door after him. " Who are you, madame ? " said the count to the veiled woman.

The stranger cast one look around her, to be certain that they were quite alone, then bending, as if she would have knelt, and joining her hands, she said with an accent of despair, " Edmond, you will not kill my son ! "

The count retreated a step, uttered a slight exclamation, and let fall the pistol he held. " What name did you pronounce then, Madame de Morcerf ? " said he.

" Yours ! " cried she, throwing back her veil,—" yours, which I alone perhaps have not forgotten. Edmond, it is not Madame de Morcerf who is come to you, it is Mercédès."

" Mercédès is dead, madame," said Monte Cristo ; " I know no one now of that name."

" Mercédès lives, monsieur, and she remembers, for she alone recognised you when she saw you, and even before she saw you,

by your voice, Edmond,—by the simple sound of your voice; and from that moment she has followed your steps, watched you, and she needs not to inquire what hand has dealt the blow which now strikes M. de Morcerf."

"Fernand, you mean, madame," replied Monte Cristo, with bitter irony; "since we are recalling names, let us remember them all."

Monte Cristo had pronounced the name of Fernand with such an expression of hatred that Mercédès felt a thrill of terror run through her frame. "You see, Edmond, I am not mistaken, and have cause to say, 'Spare my son!'"

"And who told you, madame, that I have any hostile intentions against your son?"

"No one, in truth; but a mother has a twofold sight. I divined all; I followed him this evening to the opera, and have seen all."

"If you have seen all, madame, you know that the son of Fernand has publicly insulted me," said Monte Cristo, with awful calmness.

"Oh, for pity's sake!"

"You have seen that he would have thrown his glove in my face if Morrel, one of my friends, had not stopped him."

"Listen to me: my son has also conjectured who you are; he attributes his father's misfortunes to you."

"Madame, you are mistaken, they are not misfortunes,—they are a punishment. It is not I who strike M. de Morcerf; it is Providence who punishes him."

"And why do you represent Providence?" cried Mercédès. "Why do you remember, when he forgets? What are Janina and its vizier to you, Edmond? What injury has Fernand Mondego done you in betraying Ali Tebelin?"

"True, madame," replied Monte Cristo; "all this is an affair between the French captain and the daughter of Vasiliki. It does not concern me; you are right. And if I have sworn to revenge myself, it is not on the French captain, nor on the Comte de Morcerf, but on the fisherman Fernand, the husband of the Catalane Mercédès."

"Ah, monsieur," cried the countess, "how terrible a vengeance for a fault which fatality made me commit! for I am the only culprit, Edmond; and if you must revenge yourself against any one, it is against me, who had not fortitude to bear your absence and my solitude."

"But," exclaimed Monte Cristo, "why was I absent? Why were you alone?"

"Because you had been arrested, Edmond, and were a prisoner."

"And why was I arrested? Why was I a prisoner?"

"I do not know," said Mercédès.

"You do not, madame; at least, I hope not. But I will tell you. I was arrested and became a prisoner, because under the arbour of La Réserve, the day before I was to marry you, a man named Danglars wrote this letter which the fisherman Fernand himself posted."

Monte Cristo went to a secretary, opened a drawer by a spring, from which he took a paper which had lost its original colour, and the ink of which had become of a rusty hue; this he placed in the hands of Mercédès. It was Danglars's letter to the *procureur du roi*, which the Count of Monte Cristo, disguised as a clerk from the house of Thomson and French, had taken from the Edmond Dantès's file, on the day he had paid the two hundred thousand livres to M. de Boville. Mercédès read with terror the following lines:—

"The *procureur du roi* is informed by a friend of the throne and of religion that one Edmond Dantès, mate of the ship *Pharaon*, who arrived this morning from Smyrna, after having touched at Naples and Porto Ferrajo, has been intrusted by Murat with a letter for the usurper, and by the usurper with a letter for the Bonapartist committee in Paris.

"Proof of this crime will be found on arresting him, for the letter will be found upon him, or at his father's, or in his cabin on board the *Pharaon*."

"Oh, my God!" said Mercédès, passing her hand across her brow, moist with perspiration; "and that letter—"

"I bought it for two hundred thousand livres, madame," said Monte Cristo; "but that is a trifle, since it enables me to justify myself to you."

"And the result of that letter—"

"You well know, madame, was my arrest; but you do not know how long that arrest lasted. You do not know that I remained for fourteen years within a quarter of a league of you, in a dungeon in the Château d'If. You do not know that each day of those fourteen years I renewed the vow of vengeance which I had made the first day; and yet I knew not you had married Fernand, my calumniator, and that my father had died of hunger!"

"Just God!" cried Mercédès, shuddering.

"That is what I heard on leaving my prison, fourteen years after I had entered it; and that is why, on account of Mercédès

living, and my father dead, I have sworn to revenge myself on Fernand, and—I am revenging myself."

"And you are sure the unhappy Fernand did that?"

"I am satisfied, madame, he did what I have told you. Besides, that is not much more odious than that, a Frenchman by adoption, he should pass over to the English; a Spaniard by birth, he should fight against the Spaniards; a stipendiary of Ali, he should betray and murder Ali. Compared with such things, what is the letter you have just read? A lover's stratagem, which the woman who has married that man may forgive, but not so the lover who was to have married her. Well! the French did not avenge themselves on the traitor; the Spaniards did not shoot the traitor; Ali, in his tomb, left the traitor unpunished; but I, betrayed, sacrificed, buried, have risen from my tomb by the grace of God to punish that man. He sends me for that purpose, and here I am."

The poor woman's head and arms fell; her legs bent under her, and she fell on her knees. "Forgive, Edmond, forgive for my sake, who love you still!"

The dignity of the wife arrested the impulse of the loving woman and the mother. Her forehead almost touched the carpet, when the count sprang forward and raised her. Then, seated on a chair, she looked at the manly countenance of Monte Cristo, on which grief and hatred still impressed a threatening expression.

"Not crush that accursed race!" murmured he; "be disobedient to God, who has raised me from the dead to be the instrument of his justice! Impossible, madame, impossible!"

"Edmond," said the poor mother, who tried every means, "when I call you Edmond, why do you not call me Mercédès?"

"Mercédès!" repeated Monte Cristo; "Mercédès! Well, yes, you are right, that name has still its charms; and this is the first time for a long period that I have pronounced it so distinctly. Oh, Mercédès! I have uttered your name with the sigh of melancholy, with the groan of sorrow, with the last effort of despair; I have uttered it when frozen with cold, crouched on the straw in my dungeon; I have uttered it, consumed with heat, rolling on the stone floor of my prison. Mercédès, I must revenge myself, for I suffered fourteen years,—fourteen years I wept, I cursed; now I tell you, Mercédès, I must revenge myself!"

The count, fearing to yield to the entreaties of her he had so ardently loved, recalled his sufferings to the assistance of his hatred. "Revenge yourself then, Edmond," cried the poor

mother. "But let your vengeance fall on the culprits,—on him, on me, but not on my son!"

"It is written in the Holy Book," replied Monte Cristo, "that the sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the children to the third and fourth generation. God has uttered those words through his prophet; why should I be better than God?"

"Because God has time and eternity,—two things which man has not."

Monte Cristo uttered a sigh that was like a groan, and seized his beautiful hair with both hands.

"Edmond," continued Mercédès, with her arms extended towards the count, "since I first knew you, I have adored your name, have respected your memory. Edmond, my friend, do not compel me to tarnish that noble and fine image reflected incessantly on the mirror of my heart. Edmond, if you knew all the prayers I have addressed to God for you while I hoped that you were living, and since I have thought you must be dead!—yes, dead, alas! I thought your dead body was buried at the foot of some gloomy tower; I thought your corpse was precipitated to the bottom of one of those gulfs where jailers roll their dead prisoners; and I wept! What could I do for you, Edmond, besides pray and weep? Listen; during ten years I have dreamed each night the same dream. I had been told you had endeavoured to escape; that you had taken the place of another prisoner; that you had slipped into the winding-sheet of a dead body; that you had been precipitated alive from the top of the Château d'If; and that the cry you uttered as you dashed upon the rocks first revealed the substitution to your jailers, then your murderers. Well, Edmond, I swear to you, by the head of that son for whom I entreat your pity,—Edmond, during ten years I have seen every night men balancing something shapeless and unknown at the top of a rock; during ten years I have heard each night a terrible cry which has awakened me, shuddering and cold. And I too, Edmond,—oh, believe me!—guilty as I was, oh, yes, I too have suffered much!"

"Have you suffered for your father dying in your absence?" cried Monte Cristo, thrusting his hands in his hair; "have you seen the woman you loved giving her hand to your rival while you were perishing at the bottom of a dungeon?"

"No," interrupted Mercédès, "but I have seen him whom I loved on the point of murdering my son."

Mercédès pronounced these words with such deep anguish, with an accent so despairing, that Monte Cristo could not restrain a sob. The lion was tamed; the avenger was con-

quered. "What do you ask of me?" said he,—"your son's life? Well, he shall live!"

Mercédès uttered a cry which made the tears start from Monte Cristo's eyes; but these tears disappeared almost instantaneously, for doubtless God had sent some angel to collect them,—far more precious were they in the eyes of the Lord than the richest pearls of Guzerat and of Ophir.

"Oh!" said she, seizing the count's hand, and raising it to her lips; "oh, thank you, thank you, Edmond! now you are exactly what I dreamed you were, such as I always loved you. Oh! now I may say so."

"So much the better," replied Monte Cristo, "as that poor Edmond will not have long to be loved by you. The dead will return to the tomb; the phantom will retire in darkness."

"What do you say, Edmond?"

"I say, since you command me, Mercédès, I must die."

"Die! and who said that? Who talks of dying; whence have you these ideas of death?"

"You do not suppose that, publicly outraged in the face of a whole theatre, in the presence of your friends and those of your son,—challenged by a boy, who will glory in my pardon as in a victory,—you do not suppose I can for one moment wish to live. What I most loved after you, Mercédès, was myself, my dignity, and that strength which rendered me superior to other men; that strength was my life. With one word you have crushed it, and I die."

"But the duel will not take place, Edmond, since you forgive?"

"It will take place," said Monte Cristo, in a solemn tone; "but instead of your son's blood staining the ground, mine will flow."

Mercédès shrieked, and sprang towards Monte Cristo; but suddenly stopping, "Edmond," said she, "there is a God above us, since you live, and since I have seen you again; I trust to him from my heart. While waiting his assistance, I trust to your word; you have said my son should live, have you not?"

"Yes, madame, he shall live," said Monte Cristo, surprised that without more emotion Mercédès had accepted the heroic sacrifice he made for her.

Mercédès extended her hand to the count. "Edmond," said she, and her eyes were wet with tears while looking at him to whom she spoke, "how noble it is of you; how great the action you have just performed; how sublime to have taken pity on a poor woman who offered herself to you with every chance

against her! Alas! I am grown old with grief more than with years, and cannot now remind my Edmond by a smile, or by a look, of that Mercédès whom he once spent so many hours in contemplating. Ah, believe me, Edmond, I told you I too had suffered much. I repeat it, it is melancholy to pass one's life without having one joy to recall, without preserving a single hope; but that proves that all is not finished upon the earth. No; it is not finished, I feel it by what remains in my heart. Oh! I repeat it, Edmond; what you have just done is beautiful. It is grand; it is sublime!"

"You say that, Mercédès; and what would you say if you knew the extent of the sacrifice I make to you? Suppose that the supreme Master, after having created the world, after having fertilised chaos, should pause in his creative work so that an angel might be spared the tears which our crimes should some day cause to flow from his immortal eyes; suppose that after having everything prepared, everything formed, everything made fruitful, at the moment when he was admiring his work, God had extinguished the sun, and with his foot thrust back the world into eternal night,—then you will have an idea, or rather, no, no, you will not even then be able to form an idea of what I lose in losing life at this moment."

Mercédès looked at the count with an air which depicted at the same time her astonishment, her admiration, and her gratitude. Monte Cristo pressed his forehead on his burning hands, as if his brain could no longer bear alone the weight of its thoughts.

"Edmond," said Mercédès, "I have but one word more to say to you." The count smiled bitterly. "Edmond," continued she, "you will see that if my face is pale, if my eyes are dull, if my beauty is gone; if Mercédès, in short, no longer resembles her former self in her features,—you will see that her heart is still the same. Adieu, then, Edmond. I have nothing more to ask of Heaven; I have seen you again, and have found you as noble and as great as formerly you were. Adieu, Edmond, adieu, and thank you!"

But the count did not answer. Mercédès opened the door of the cabinet and had disappeared before he had recovered from the painful and profound reverie into which his thwarted vengeance had plunged him. The clock of the Invalides struck one when the carriage which conveyed Madame de Morcerf away rolling on the pavement of the Champs Elysées made Monte Cristo raise his head. "What a fool I was," said he, "not to tear my heart out on the day when I resolved to avenge myself!"

CHAPTER XC

THE MEETING

After Mercédès had left Monte Cristo, a gloomy shadow seemed to overspread everything. Around him and within him the course of thought was suspended; his energetic mind slumbered as does the body after extreme fatigue. "What!" said he to himself, while the lamp and the wax lights were nearly burned out, and the servants were waiting impatiently in the ante-room,—"what! this edifice which I have been so long preparing, which I have reared with so much care and toil, is to be crumbled by a single touch, a word, a breath! Eh, what! this self, of whom I thought so much, of whom I was so proud, who had appeared so worthless in the dungeons of the Château d'If, and whom I had succeeded in making so great, will be to-morrow but a lump of clay! Alas! it is not the death of the body I regret. Is not that destruction of the vital principle the rest to which everything is tending, to which every unhappy being aspires, the repose of matter after which I so long sighed, and which I was seeking to attain by the painful process of starvation when Faria appeared in my dungeon? What is death for me but one step more towards repose? No, it is not existence, then, that I regret, but the ruin of my plans, so slowly elaborated, so laboriously framed. Providence, who, I thought, favoured them, was then opposed to them! It is not God's will they should be accomplished. This burden, almost as heavy as a world, which I had raised, and had thought to bear to the end, was too great for my strength; and I am compelled to lay it down in the middle of my career. Oh! shall I then again become a fatalist, whom fourteen years of despair and ten of hope had rendered a believer in Providence? And all this—all this, because my heart, which I thought dead, was only sleeping; because it has awakened and has beaten again; because I have yielded to the pain of the emotion excited in my breast by a woman's voice! Yet," continued the count, becoming each moment more absorbed in the anticipation of the terrible sacrifice for the morrow which Mercédès had accepted,—"yet it is impossible that so noble-minded a woman should thus through selfishness consent to my death when in the prime of life and strength; it is impossible she can carry to such a point maternal love, or rather, delirium. There are virtues which by exaggeration become crimes. No, she must have conceived some pathetic scene; she will come and throw herself between us,

and what would be sublime here will appear there ridiculous." The blush of pride mounted to the count's forehead as this thought passed through his mind. "Ridiculous," repeated he; "and the ridicule will fall on me. I ridiculous! no, I would rather die!"

By thus exaggerating the anticipated ill-fortune of the next day, to which he had condemned himself by promising Mercédès to spare her son, the count at last was led to exclaim, "Folly! folly! folly! to carry generosity so far as to place myself as a mark for that young man to aim at. He will never believe my death was a suicide; and yet it is important for the honour of my memory,—and this surely is not vanity, but a justifiable pride,—it is important that the world should know that I have consented by my free will to stop my arm already raised to strike, and that with that arm so powerful against others I have struck myself. It must be, it shall be!" Seizing a pen, he drew a paper from a secret drawer in his bureau, and traced at the bottom of that paper, which was no other than his will, made since his arrival in Paris, a sort of codicil, clearly explaining the nature of his death. "I do this, O my God!" said he, with his eyes raised to heaven, "as much for thy honour as for mine. I have during ten years considered myself the agent of thy vengeance; and other wretches, like a Morcerf, a Danglars, a Villefort, even that Morcerf himself, must not imagine that chance has freed them from their enemy. Let them know on the contrary that their punishment, which had been decreed by Providence, is only delayed by my present determination; that although they escape it in this world, it awaits them in another, and that they are only exchanging time for eternity!"

While he was thus agitated by these gloomy uncertainties, these wretched waking dreams of grief, the first rays of twilight pierced his windows and shone upon the pale blue paper on which he had just traced that last justification of Providence. It was five o'clock in the morning. Suddenly a slight noise reached his ear, which appeared like a stifled sigh. He turned his head, looked around him, and saw no one; but the sound was repeated distinctly enough to convince him of its reality. He arose, and quietly opening the door of the drawing-room saw Haydée, who had fallen on a chair with her arms hanging down and her beautiful head thrown back. She had been standing at the door to prevent his going out without seeing her, until sleep, which the young cannot resist, had overpowered her frame, wearied as she was with watching so long. The noise of the door did not awaken her, and Monte Cristo gazed

at her with affectionate regret. "She remembered she had a son," said he; "and I forgot I had a daughter." Then, shaking his head sorrowfully, "Poor Haydée!" said he; "she wished to see me, to speak to me; she had feared or guessed something. Oh! I cannot go without taking leave of her; I cannot die without confiding her to some one." He quietly regained his seat and wrote under the other lines:—

"I bequeath to Maximilian Morrel, captain of Spahis and son of my former patron, Pierre Morrel, ship-owner at Marseilles, the sum of twenty millions, a part of which may be offered to his sister Julie and brother-in-law Emmanuel, if he does not fear this increase of fortune may mar their happiness. These twenty millions are concealed in my grotto at Monte Cristo, of which Bertuccio knows the secret. If his heart is free, and he will marry Haydée, the daughter of Ali, Pacha of Janina, whom I have brought up with the love of a father, and who has shown the love and tenderness of a daughter for me, he will thus accomplish my last wish. This will has already constituted Haydée heiress of the rest of my fortune,—consisting of lands, funds in England, Austria, and Holland, furniture in my different palaces and houses; and which, besides the twenty millions, and the legacies to my servants, may still amount to sixty millions."

He was finishing the last line when a cry behind him made him start; and the pen fell from his hand. "Haydée," said he, "did you read it?"

The young woman, awakened by the light striking upon her eyelids, had risen and approached the count without his hearing her light steps on the carpet. "Oh, my lord," said she, "why are you writing thus at such an hour? Why are you bequeathing all your fortune to me? Are you going to leave me?"

"I am going on a journey, dear child," said Monte Cristo, with an expression of infinite tenderness and melancholy; "and if any misfortune should happen to me—" The count stopped.

"Well?" asked the young girl, with an authoritative tone the count had never observed before, and which startled him.

"Well, if any misfortune happen to me," replied Monte Cristo, "I wish my daughter to be happy."

Haydée smiled sorrowfully and shook her head. "Do you think of dying, my lord?" said she.

"The wise man has said it is good to think of death, my child."

"Well, if you die," said she, "bequeath your fortune to others; for if you die, I shall no longer need anything;" and taking the paper, she tore it in four pieces and threw it into the middle of the room. Then, the effort having exhausted her

strength, she fell, not asleep this time, but fainting on the floor. The count leaned over her and raised her in his arms; and seeing that sweet pale face, those lovely eyes closed, that beautiful form motionless and to all appearance lifeless, the idea occurred to him for the first time that perhaps she loved him otherwise than as a daughter loves a father.

"Alas!" murmured he, with deep sorrow; "I might, then, have been happy yet." Then he carried Haydée to her apartment, resigned her to the care of her attendants, and returning to his cabinet, which he shut quickly this time, he copied the destroyed will. As he was finishing, the sound of a cabriolet entering the yard was heard. Monte Cristo approached the window, and saw Maximilian and Emmanuel alight. "Good!" said he; "it was time," and he sealed his will with three seals. One moment afterwards he heard a noise in the drawing-room, and went to open the door himself.

Morrel was there; he had come twenty minutes before the time appointed. "I am perhaps come too soon, count," said he; "but I frankly acknowledge that I have not closed my eyes all night, nor has any one in my house. I needed to see you strong in your courageous assurance to recover myself."

Monte Cristo could not resist this proof of affection; he did not extend his hand to the young man, but flew to him with open arms. "Morrel," said he, "it is a happy day for me to feel I am beloved by such a man as you. Good-morning, Emmanuel; you will come with me, then, Maximilian?"

"Did you doubt it?" said the young captain.

"But if I were wrong—"

"I watched you during all that scene of the challenge yesterday; I have been thinking of your firmness all this night, and I said to myself that justice must be on your side, or man's countenance is no longer to be relied on."

"But, Morrel, Albert is your friend?"

"A simple acquaintance, count."

"You met him on the same day you first saw me?"

"Yes, that is true; but I should not have recollected it had you not reminded me."

"Thank you, Morrel." Then ringing the bell once, "Here," said he to Ali, who came immediately, "take that to my solicitor. It is my will, Morrel. When I am dead, you will go and examine it."

"What!" said Morrel, "you dead?"

"Yes; must I not be prepared for everything, dear friend? But what did you do yesterday after you left me?"

"I went to Tortoni, where, as I expected, I found Beauchamp and Château-Renaud. I own I was seeking them."

"Why, when all was arranged?"

"Listen, count, the affair is serious and unavoidable."

"Did you doubt it?"

"No; the offence was public, and every one was already talking of it."

"Well?"

"Well, I hoped to get an exchange of arms, to substitute the sword for the pistol; the pistol is blind."

"Have you succeeded?" asked Monte Cristo, quickly, with an imperceptible gleam of hope.

"No, for your skill with the sword is so well known."

"Ah! who has betrayed me?"

"The fencing-masters whom you have overcome."

"And you failed?"

"They positively refused."

"Morrel," said the count, "have you ever seen me fire a pistol?"

"Never."

"Well, we have time; look." Monte Cristo took the pistols he held in his hand when Mercédès entered, and fixing an ace of clubs against the iron plate, with four shots he successively shot off the four sides of the club.

At each shot Morrel turned pale. He examined the balls with which Monte Cristo performed this dexterous feat, and saw that they were no larger than deer-shot. "It is astonishing!" said he; "look, Emmanuel." Then, turning towards Monte Cristo, "Count," said he, "in the name of all that is dear to you I entreat you not to kill Albert! the unhappy youth has a mother."

"You are right," said Monte Cristo; "and I have none." These words were uttered in a tone which made Morrel shudder.

"You are the offended party, count."

"Doubtless; what does that imply?"

"That you will fire first."

"I fire first?"

"Oh! I obtained, or rather claimed that; we had conceded enough for them to yield us that."

"And at what distance?"

"Twenty paces."

A terrific smile passed over the count's lips. "Morrel," said he, "do not forget what you have just seen."

"The only chance for Albert's safety, then, will arise from your emotion."

"I suffer from emotion?" said Monte Cristo.

"Or from your generosity, my friend; to so good a marksman as you are I may say what would appear absurd to another."

"What is that?"

"Break his arm, wound him, but do not kill him."

"I will tell you, Morrel," said the count, "that I do not need entreating to spare the life of M. de Morcerf; he shall be so well spared that he will return quietly with his two friends, while I—"

"And you?"

"That will be another thing; I shall be brought home."

"No, no," cried Maximilian, beside himself.

"It is as I told you, my dear Morrel; M. de Morcerf will kill me."

Morrel looked at the count like one bewildered. "But what has happened, then, since last evening, count?"

"The same thing which happened to Brutus the night before the battle of Philippi; I have seen a ghost."

"And that ghost—"

"Told me, Morrel, that I had lived long enough."

Maximilian and Emmanuel looked at each other. Monte Cristo drew out his watch. "Let us go," said he; "it is five minutes past seven, and the appointment was for eight o'clock."

A carriage was in readiness at the door. Monte Cristo stepped into it with his two friends. He had stopped a moment in the passage to listen at the door; and Maximilian and Emmanuel, who had considerately passed forward a few steps, thought they heard him answer, by a sigh, a sob from within.

As the clock struck eight, they drove up to the place of meeting. "Here we are," said Morrel, looking out of the window; "and we are first on the ground."

"Monsieur will pardon me," said Baptistin, who had followed his master with indescribable terror, "but I think I see a carriage down there under the trees."

Monte Cristo sprang lightly from the carriage, and offered his hand to assist Emmanuel and Maximilian. The latter retained the count's hand between his. "Ah! very good," said he; "this is as I like to see the hand of a man whose life depends on the goodness of his cause."

"Truly," said Emmanuel "I perceive two young men down there, who are evidently waiting."

Monte Cristo drew Morrel, not aside, but a step or two behind

his brother-in-law. "Maximilian," said he, "are your affections disengaged?" Morrel looked at Monte Cristo with astonishment. "I do not seek your confidence, my dear friend. I only ask you a simple question; answer it,—that is all I require."

"I love a young girl, count."

"Do you love her much?"

"More than my life."

"Another hope defeated!" said the count. Then, with a sigh, "Poor Haydée!" murmured he.

"In truth, count, if I knew less of you, I should think you were less brave than you are."

"Because I sigh when thinking of some one I am leaving? Come, Morrel, it is not like a soldier to be so bad a judge of courage. Do I regret life? What is it to me, who have passed twenty years between life and death, whether I live or die? Moreover, do not alarm yourself, Morrel; this weakness, if it is such, is betrayed to you alone. I know the world is a drawing-room, from which we must retreat politely and honestly,—that is, with a bow, and all debts of honour paid."

"That is to the purpose. Have you brought your arms?"

"I?—what for? I hope these gentlemen have theirs."

"I will inquire," said Morrel.

"Do, but make no treaty; you understand me?"

"You need not fear."

Morrel advanced towards Beauchamp and Château-Renaud, who, seeing his intention, came to meet him. The three young people bowed to each other courteously, if not affably.

"Excuse me, gentlemen," said Morrel, "but I do not see M. de Morcerf."

"He sent us word this morning," replied Château-Renaud, "that he would meet us on the ground."

"Ah!" said Morrel.

Beauchamp pulled out his watch. "It is only five minutes past eight," said he to Morrel; "there is not much time lost yet."

"Oh! I did not refer to that," replied Morrel.

"And besides," Château-Renaud interrupted, "here is a carriage."

In fact, a carriage approached rapidly along one of the avenues leading towards the open space where they were assembled. "Gentlemen," said Morrel, "you are doubtless provided with pistols? M. de Monte Cristo yields his right of using his."

"We had anticipated this kindness on the part of the count,"

said Beauchamp; "and I have brought some arms which I bought eight or ten days since, thinking that I might need them on a similar occasion. They are quite new, and have not yet been used. Will you examine them?"

"Oh, M. Beauchamp," said Morrel, bowing, "when you assure me that M. de Morcerf does not know these arms, you are of course aware that your word is sufficient."

"Gentlemen," said Château-Renaud, "it is not Morcerf coming in that carriage,—upon my word, it is Franz and Debray!" The two young men he announced were indeed approaching. "What chance brings you here, gentlemen?" said Château-Renaud, shaking hands with each of them.

"Because," said Debray, "Albert sent this morning to request us to come."

Beauchamp and Château-Renaud exchanged looks of astonishment.

"I think I understand his reason," said Morrel.

"What is it?"

"Yesterday afternoon I received a letter from M. de Morcerf, begging me to attend the opera."

"And I," said Debray.

"And I also," said Franz.

"And we too," added Beauchamp and Château-Renaud.

"Having wished you all to witness that challenge, he now wishes you to be present at the combat."

"Exactly so," said the young men; "you have probably guessed right."

"But after all these arrangements, he does not come himself," said Château-Renaud; "Albert is ten minutes after time."

"There he comes," said Beauchamp; "on horseback at a full gallop, followed by a servant."

"How imprudent!" said Château-Renaud, "to come on horseback to fight with the pistol, after all the instructions I had given him."

"And besides," said Beauchamp, "with a collar above his cravat, an open coat and white waistcoat? Why has he not painted a spot upon his heart?—it would have been more simple."

Meanwhile Albert had arrived within ten paces of the group formed by the five young men. He jumped from his horse, threw the bridle on his servant's arm, and joined them. He was pale, and his eyes were red and swollen; it was evident that he had not slept. A shade of melancholy gravity overspread his countenance, which was not natural to him. "I thank you,

gentlemen," said he, "for having complied with my request; I feel extremely grateful for this mark of friendship." Morrel had stepped back as Morcerf approached, and remained at a short distance. "And to you also, M. Morrel, my thanks are due. Come, there cannot be too many."

"Monsieur," said Maximilian, "you are not perhaps aware that I am M. de Monte Cristo's friend?"

"I was not sure, but I expected it. So much the better; the more men of honour there are here, the better I shall be satisfied."

"M. Morrel," said Château-Renaud, "will you apprise the Count of Monte Cristo that M. de Morcerf is arrived, and that we are at his command?"

Morrel started to fulfil his commission. Beauchamp at the same time drew the box of pistols from the carriage.

"Stop, gentlemen!" said Albert; "I have two words to say to the Count of Monte Cristo."

"In private?" asked Morrel.

"No, monsieur; before all who are here."

Albert's witnesses looked at each other in surprise; Franz and Debray exchanged some words in a low tone; and Morrel, rejoiced at this unexpected incident, went to fetch the count, who was walking in a retired path with Emmanuel.

"What does he want with me!" said Monte Cristo.

"I do not know, but he wishes to speak to you."

"Oh! said Monte Cristo, "I trust he is not going to tempt God by some new outrage!"

"I do not think such is his intention," said Morrel.

The count advanced, accompanied by Maximilian and Emmanuel; his calm and serene expression formed a singular contrast to Albert's grief-stricken face, who approached also, followed by the four young men.

When at three paces from each other, Albert and the count stopped.

"Approach, gentlemen," said Albert; "I wish you not to lose one word of what I am about to have the honour of saying to the Count of Monte Cristo; for it must be repeated by you to all who will listen to it, strange as it may appear to you."

"Proceed, monsieur," said the count.

"Monsieur," said Albert, with a voice that trembled at first, but gradually became firmer; "I reproached you with exposing the conduct of M. de Morcerf in Epirus, for however guilty he might be, I thought you had no right to punish him; but I have since learned that you have that right. It is not Fernand

Mondego's treachery towards Ali Pacha which induces me so readily to excuse you, but the treachery of the fisherman Fernand towards you, and the almost unheard-of miseries which were its consequences. And therefore I say, and proclaim it publicly, that you were justified in avenging yourself on my father; and I, his son, thank you for not using greater severity."

Had a thunderbolt fallen in the midst of the spectators of this unexpected scene, it would not have surprised them more than did Albert's declaration. As for Monte Cristo, his eyes slowly rose towards heaven with an expression of infinite gratitude. He was much astonished that Albert's fiery nature, of which he had seen so much among the Roman bandits, should suddenly stoop to this humiliation. He recognised the influence of Mercédès, and saw why her noble heart had not opposed the sacrifice which she knew beforehand would be useless.

"Now, monsieur," said Albert, "if you think my apology sufficient, pray give me your hand. Next to the merit of infallibility which you appear to possess, I rank that of candidly acknowledging a fault; but this confession concerns me only. I acted well as a man, but you have acted better than man. An angel alone could have saved one of us from death; and that angel came from heaven, if not to make us friends (which, alas! fatality renders impossible), at least to make us esteem each other."

Monte Cristo, with moistened eye, heaving breast, and lips half open, extended to Albert a hand, which the latter pressed with a sentiment resembling respectful fear. "Gentlemen," said he, "M. de Monte Cristo receives my apology; I acted hastily towards him. Haste is a bad counsellor; I did wrong. Now my fault is repaired. I hope the world will not call me cowardly for acting as my conscience dictated. But if any one should entertain a false opinion of me," added he, drawing himself up as if he would challenge both friends and enemies, "I shall endeavour to correct his mistake."

"What has, then, happened during the night?" asked Beauchamp of Château-Renaud; "we appear to make a very sorry figure here."

"In truth, what Albert has just done is either very despicable or very noble," replied the baron.

"What can it mean?" said Debray to Franz. "The Count of Monte Cristo acts dishonourably to M. de Morcerf, and is justified by his son! Had I ten Janinas in my family, I should consider myself bound to one obligation only; and that would be —to fight ten times."

As for Monte Cristo, his head was bent down, his arms were powerless. Bowing under the weight of twenty-four years' reminiscences, he thought not of Albert, of Beauchamp, of Château-Renaud, or of any of that group; but he thought of that courageous woman who had come to plead for her son's life, to whom he had offered his, and who had now saved it by the revelation of a dreadful family secret, capable of destroying for ever in that young man's heart every feeling of filial piety.

"Providence still!" murmured he; "now only am I fully convinced of being the emissary of God!"

CHAPTER XCI

THE MOTHER AND SON

THE Count of Monte Cristo bowed to the five young people with a melancholy and dignified smile, and got into his carriage with Maximilian and Emmanuel. Albert, Beauchamp, and Château-Renaud remained alone. The young man's look at his two friends, without being timid, appeared to ask their opinion of what he had just done.

"Indeed, my dear friend," said Beauchamp first, who had either the most feeling or the least dissimulation, "allow me to congratulate you; this is a very unhoped-for conclusion of a very disagreeable affair."

Albert remained silent and wrapped in thought. Château-Renaud contented himself with tapping his boot with his flexible cane. "Are we not going?" said he, after this embarrassing silence.

"When you please," replied Beauchamp; "allow me only to compliment M. de Morcerf, who has given proof to-day of a generosity so chivalric, so rare!"

"Oh, yes," said Château-Renaud.

"It is magnificent," continued Beauchamp, "to be able to exercise so much self-control!"

"Assuredly; as for me, I should have been incapable of it," said Château-Renaud, with most significant coolness.

"Gentlemen," interrupted Albert, "I think you did not understand that something very serious had passed between M. de Monte Cristo and myself."

"Possibly, possibly," said Beauchamp, immediately; "but every simpleton would not be able to understand your heroism, and sooner or later you will find yourself compelled to explain it to them more energetically than would be convenient to your

bodily health and the duration of your life. May I give you a friendly counsel? Set out for Naples, the Hague, or St. Petersburg,—calm countries, where the point of honour is better understood than among our hot-headed Parisians. Seek quietude and oblivion, so that you may return peaceably to France after a few years. Am I not right, M. de Château-Renaud?"

"That is quite my opinion," said the gentleman; "nothing induces serious duels so much as a fruitless one."

"Thank you, gentlemen," replied Albert, with a cold smile; "I shall follow your advice,—not because you give it, but because I had already intended to leave France. I thank you equally for the service you have rendered me in being my seconds. It is deeply engraved on my heart, since after what you have just said, I remember that only."

Château-Renaud and Beauchamp looked at each other; the impression was the same on both of them, and the tone in which Morcerf had just expressed his thanks was so determined that the position would have become embarrassing for all if the conversation had continued.

"Farewell, Albert," said Beauchamp, suddenly, carelessly extending his hand to the young man, who gave no sign of throwing off his reserve, and paid no attention to the offered hand.

"Farewell," said Château-Renaud, in his turn, keeping the little cane in his left hand, and making a motion with his right.

Albert's lips scarcely whispered "Farewell," but his look was more explicit; it embraced a whole poem of restrained anger, proud disdain, and generous indignation. He preserved his melancholy and motionless position for some time after his two friends had regained their carriage; then, suddenly loosing his horse from the little tree to which his servant had fastened it, he sprang on it, and galloped off in the direction of Paris. In a quarter of an hour he was entering the hotel in the Rue du Helder. As he alighted, he thought he saw behind the curtain of the count's bedroom his father's pale face. Albert turned away his head with a sigh, and went to his own apartments. He cast one lingering look on all the luxuries which had rendered life so easy and so happy since his infancy; he looked at the pictures, in which the faces seemed to smile, and the landscapes, which appeared to glow with brighter colours. He took from its oaken frame his mother's portrait, which he rolled up, leaving empty and dark the gold casing which surrounded it. Then he arranged all his beautiful Turkish arms, his fine English

guns, his Japanese ware, his cups mounted in silver, his artistic bronzes, signed "Feuchères" or "Barye;" examined the cupboards, and placed the key in each; threw into a drawer of his secretary, which he left open, all the pocket-money he had about him, and with it the thousand fancy jewels from his vases and his jewel-boxes; made an exact inventory of all and placed it on the most conspicuous part of the table, after putting aside the books and papers which encumbered it.

At the beginning of this work his servant, notwithstanding his prohibition, came to his room. "What do you want?" asked Morcerf, in a tone sorrowful rather than irritated.

"Pardon, monsieur," replied the valet; "you had forbidden me to disturb you, but the Comte de Morcerf has sent for me."

"Well?" said Albert.

"I did not like to go to him without first seeing you."

"Why?"

"Because the count is doubtless aware that I accompanied you to the meeting this morning."

"It is probable," said Albert.

"And since he has sent for me, it is doubtless to question me on what happened there. What must I answer?"

"The truth."

"Then I shall say the duel did not take place?"

"You will say that I apologised to the Count of Monte Cristo. Go."

The valet bowed and retired, and Albert returned to his inventory. As he was finishing this work, the sound of horses prancing in the yard, and the wheels of a carriage shaking his window, attracted his attention. He approached the window, and saw his father get into his carriage and go away. The door of the house was hardly closed behind the count when Albert bent his steps to his mother's room; and no one being there to announce him, he advanced to her bedroom, and distressed by what he saw and guessed, stopped for one moment at the door. As if the same soul had animated these two beings, Mercédès was doing the same in her apartments as he had just done in his. Everything was in order,—laces, dresses, jewels, linen, money, all were arranged in the drawers,—and the countess was carefully collecting the keys. Albert saw all these preparations; he understood them, and exclaiming, "My mother!" he threw his arms around her neck.

The artist who could have depicted the expression of these two countenances would certainly have made of them a beautiful picture. All these proofs of an energetic resolution, which

Albert did not fear on his own account, alarmed him for his mother. "What are you doing?" asked he.

"What were you doing?" replied she.

"Oh, my mother!" exclaimed Albert, so overcome that he could scarcely speak, "it is not the same with you and me; you cannot have made the same resolution that I have, for I am come to warn you that I bid adieu to your house, and—and to you!"

"I also," replied Mercédès, "am going, and I acknowledge that I had depended on your accompanying me; have I deceived myself?"

"My mother," said Albert, with firmness, "I cannot make you share the fate I have planned for myself. I must live henceforth without rank and fortune, and to begin this hard apprenticeship I must borrow from a friend the loaf I shall eat until I have earned one. So, my dear mother, I am going at once to ask Franz to lend me the small sum I shall require to supply my present wants."

"You, my poor child, suffer poverty and hunger! Oh, say not so; it will break my resolutions."

"But not mine, mother," replied Albert. "I am young and strong; I believe I am courageous; and since yesterday I have learned the power of will. Alas! my dear mother, some have suffered so much, and yet live, and have raised a new fortune on the ruin of all the promises of happiness which Heaven had made them,—on the fragments of all the hope which God had given them! I have seen that, my mother; I know that from the gulf in which their enemies have plunged them they have risen with so much vigour and glory that in their turn they have ruled their former conquerors, and have punished them. No, my mother, from this moment I have done with the past, and accept nothing from it,—not even a name; for you can understand—can you not?—that your son cannot bear the name of a man who ought to blush before another."

"Albert, my child," said Mercédès, "if I had a stronger heart, that is the counsel I would have given you. Your conscience has spoken when my voice became too weak; listen to its dictates. You had friends, Albert; break off their acquaintance. But do not despair; you have life before you, my dear Albert, for you are yet scarcely twenty-two years old. And as a pure heart like yours wants a spotless name, take my father's; it was Herrera. I am sure, my Albert, that whatever may be your career, you will soon render that name illustrious. Then, my friend, return to the world still more brilliant for your past

sorrows; and if I am wrong, still let me cherish these hopes, for I have no future to look forward to,—for me the grave opens when I pass the threshold of this house."

"I will do as you desire, my dear mother," said the young man. "Yes, I share your hopes; the anger of Heaven will not pursue us,—you so pure, and me so innocent. But since our resolution is formed, let us act promptly. M. de Morcerf went out about half an hour since; the opportunity is favourable for avoiding an explanation."

"I am ready, my son," said Mercédès.

Albert ran immediately to the boulevard, where he procured a *fiacre* to take them away from the house; he recollected that there was a small furnished house to let in the Rue de Saints Pères, where his mother would find a humble but decent lodging, and thither he intended conducting the countess. As the *fiacre* stopped at the door, and Albert was alighting, a man approached, and gave him a letter. Albert recognised the bearer. "From the count," said Bertuccio. Albert took the letter, opened it, and read it, then looked round for Bertuccio, but he had gone. He returned to Mercédès with tears in his eyes and heaving breast, and without uttering a word, he gave her the letter. Mercédès read:—

ALBERT,—While showing you that I have discovered your plans, I hope also to convince you of my delicacy. You are free, you leave the count's house, and you take your mother to your home; but reflect. Albert, you owe her more than your poor noble heart can pay her. Keep the struggle for yourself, bear all the suffering, but spare her the trial of poverty which must accompany your first efforts; for she deserves not even the shadow of the misfortune which has this day fallen on her, and Providence wills not the innocent should suffer for the guilty. I know you are going to leave the Rue du Helder without taking anything with you. Do not seek to know how I discovered it; I know it,—that is sufficient. Now, listen, Albert. Twenty-four years ago I returned, proud and joyful, to my country. I had a betrothed, Albert, a lovely girl, whom I adored; and I was bringing to my betrothed a hundred and fifty louis, painfully amassed by ceaseless toil. This money was for her. I destined it for her; and knowing the treachery of the sea, I buried our treasure in the little garden of the house my father lived in at Marseilles, on the Allées de Meillan. Your mother, Albert, knows that poor house well. A short time since, I passed through Marseilles, and went to see the old house, which revived so many painful recollections; and in the evening I took a spade and dug in the corner of the garden, where I had concealed my treasure. The iron box was there; no one had touched it! It was under a beautiful fig-tree that my father had planted the day I was born, which overshadowed the spot. Well, Albert, this money, which was formerly designed to promote the comfort and tranquillity of the

woman I adored, may now by a strange and sad chance be devoted to the same purpose. Oh, feel for me, who could offer millions to that poor woman, but who return her only the piece of black bread, forgotten under my poor roof since the day I was torn from her I loved! You are a generous man, Albert, but perhaps you may be blinded by pride or resentment; if you refuse me, if you ask another for what I have a right to offer you, I will say it is ungenerous of you to refuse the life of your mother at the hands of a man whose father was brought to death by your father, in all the horrors of hunger and despair.

Albert stood pale and motionless to hear what his mother would decide after she had finished reading this letter. Mercédès turned her eyes with an ineffable expression towards heaven. "I accept it," said she; "he has a right to pay the dowry, which I shall take with me to some convent!" Putting the letter in her bosom, she took her son's arm, and with a firmer step than even she perhaps had thought possible, she went downstairs.

CHAPTER XCII

THE SUICIDE

MEANWHILE Monte Cristo had also returned to town with Emmanuel and Maximilian. Their return was cheerful. Emmanuel did not conceal his joy at having seen peace succeed to war, and acknowledged openly his philanthropic tastes. Morrel, in a corner of the carriage, allowed his brother-in-law's gaiety to expend itself in words, while he felt equal inward joy, which, however, betrayed itself only by his look. At the Barrière du Trône they met Bertuccio, who was waiting there, motionless as a sentinel at his post. Monte Cristo put his head out of the window, exchanged a few words with him in a low tone, and the steward disappeared.

"Monsieur the Count," said Emmanuel, when they were at the end of the Place Royale, "put me down at my door, that my wife may not have a single moment of needless anxiety on my account or yours."

"If it were not ridiculous to make a display of our triumph," said Morrel, "I would invite the count to our house; but the count also doubtless has some trembling heart to comfort. So we will take leave of our friend, and let him hasten home."

"Stop a moment," said Monte Cristo; "do not let me lose both of my companions. Return, Emmanuel, to your charming wife, and present my best compliments to her; and do you, Morrel, accompany me to the Champs Elysées."

"Willingly," said Maximilian; "particularly as I have business in that quarter."

"Shall we wait breakfast for you?" asked Emmanuel.

"No," replied the young man. The door was closed, and the carriage proceeded. "See what good fortune I brought you!" said Morrel, when he was alone with the count. "Have you not thought so?"

"Yes," said Monte Cristo, "for that reason I wished to keep you near me."

"It is miraculous!" continued Morrel, answering his own thoughts.

"What?" said Monte Cristo.

"What has just happened."

"Yes," said the count, "you are right; it is miraculous."

"For Albert is brave," resumed Morrel.

"Very brave," said Monte Cristo; "I have seen him sleep with a sword suspended over his head."

"And I know he has fought two duels," said Maximilian; "how can you reconcile that with his conduct this morning?"

"All owing to your influence," replied Monte Cristo, smiling.

"It is well for Albert he is not in the army," said Morrel.

"Why?"

"An apology on the ground!" said the young captain, shaking his head.

"Come," said the count, mildly, "do not entertain the prejudices of ordinary men, Morrel! Do you not understand that if Albert is brave, he cannot be a coward; that he must then have had some reason for acting as he did this morning, and therefore that his conduct is more heroic than otherwise?"

"Doubtless, doubtless," said Morrel; "but I shall say, like the Spaniard, 'He has not been so brave to-day as he was yesterday.'"

"You will breakfast with me, will you not, Morrel?" said the count, to turn the conversation.

"No, I must leave you at ten o'clock."

"Your engagement was for breakfast, then?" said the count.

Morrel smiled, and shook his head.

"Still you must breakfast somewhere."

"But if I am not hungry?" said the young man.

"Oh!" said the count, "I know of only two things which destroy the appetite: grief,—and as, happily, I see that you are very cheerful, it is not that,—and love. Now, after what you told me this morning of your heart, I may believe—"

"Well, count," replied Morrel, gaily, "I will not dispute it."

"And you do not tell me about it, Maximilian?" said the count, in a tone which showed how gladly he would have been admitted to the secret.

"I showed you this morning that I had a heart; did I not, count?" Monte Cristo answered by extending his hand to the young man. "Well!" continued the latter, "since that heart is no longer with you in the Bois de Vincennes, it is elsewhere, and I must go and find it."

"Go," said the count, deliberately, "go, dear friend; but promise me, if you meet with any obstacle, to remember that I have some power in this world; that I am happy to use that power in the behalf of those I love; and that I love you, Morrel."

"I will remember it," said the young man, "as selfish children recollect their parents when they want their aid. When I need your assistance, and the moment may come, I will come to you, count."

"Well, I rely upon your promise. Adieu, then."

"Till we meet again."

They had arrived in the Champs Elysées. Monte Cristo opened the carriage-door; Morrel sprang out on the pavement; Bertuccio was waiting on the steps. Morrel disappeared through the avenue of Marigny, and Monte Cristo hastened to join Bertuccio.

"Well?" asked he.

"She is going to leave her house," said the steward.

"And her son?"

"Florentin, his valet, thinks he is going to do the same."

"Come this way." Monte Cristo took Bertuccio into his cabinet, wrote the letter we have seen, and gave it to the steward. "Go," said he, quickly. "By the way, let Haydée be informed that I have returned."

"Here I am," said the young girl, who at the sound of the carriage had run downstairs, and whose face was radiant with joy at seeing the count return safely. Bertuccio went out. Every transport of a daughter finding a beloved father, all the delight of a mistress seeing an adored lover were felt by Haydée during the first moments of this meeting, awaited by her with so much impatience. Certainly, Monte Cristo's joy, although less openly expressed, was not less intense. Joy to hearts which have suffered long is like the dew on the ground after a long drought; both the heart and the ground absorb that beneficent moisture falling on them, and nothing is outwardly apparent.

Monte Cristo was beginning to think, what he had not for a

long time dared to believe, that there were two Mercédès in the world, and that he might yet be happy. His eye, elate with happiness, was reading eagerly the moist eyes of Haydée, when suddenly the door opened. The count knit his brow.

"M. de Morcerf!" said Baptistin, as if that name alone would suffice for his excuse.

In fact, the count's face brightened. "Which," asked he, "the viscount or the count?"

"The count."

"Oh!" exclaimed Haydée, "is it not yet finished?"

"I know not if it is finished, my beloved child," said Monte Cristo, taking the young girl's hands; "but I do know you have nothing more to fear."

"But it is the wretched—"

"That man cannot injure me, Haydée," said Monte Cristo; "it was his son alone there was cause to fear."

"And what I have suffered," said the young girl, "you shall never know, my lord."

Monte Cristo smiled. "By my father's tomb!" said he, extending his hand over the head of the young girl, "I swear to you, Haydée, that if any misfortune happens, it will not be to me."

"I believe you, my lord, as if God had spoken to me," said the young girl, presenting her forehead to the count.

Monte Cristo pressed on that pure beautiful forehead a kiss which made two hearts throb at once, the one violently, the other heavily. "Oh!" he murmured, "shall I then be permitted to love again? Ask M. de Morcerf into the drawing-room," said he to Baptistin, while he led the beautiful Greek to a private staircase.

We must explain this visit, expected perhaps by Monte Cristo, but doubtless unexpected to our readers. While Mercédès, as we have said, was making an inventory of her property like that which Albert made of his, while she was arranging her jewels, shutting her drawers, collecting her keys, to leave everything in perfect order, she did not perceive a pale and sinister face at a glass door which threw light into the passage, from which everything could be both seen and heard. He who was thus looking, without being heard or seen, probably heard and saw all that passed in Madame de Morcerf's apartments. From that glass door the pale-faced man went to the count's bedroom, and raised with a contracted hand the curtain of a window overlooking the courtyard. He remained there ten minutes, motionless and dumb, listening to the beating of his own heart.

For him those ten minutes were very long. It was then that Albert, returned from his rendezvous, perceived his father watching for his arrival behind a curtain, and turned aside. The count's eye expanded; he knew Albert had insulted Monte Cristo terribly, and that in every country in the world such an insult would lead to a deadly duel. Albert returned safely; then the count was revenged.

An indescribable ray of joy illumined that wretched countenance, like the last ray of the sun before it disappears in clouds which appear more like its tomb than its couch. But, as we have said, he waited in vain for his son to come to his apartment with the account of his triumph. He easily understood why his son did not come to see him before he went to avenge his father's honour; but when that was done, why did not his son come and throw himself into his arms?

It was then, when the count could not see Albert, that he sent for his servant. The reader will remember that Albert had instructed his servant not to conceal anything from the count. Ten minutes afterwards, General de Morcerf was seen on the steps in a black coat with a military collar, black pantaloons, and black gloves. He had apparently given previous orders; for, as he reached the bottom step, his carriage came from the coach-house ready for him. The valet threw into the carriage the general's military cloak, in which two swords were wrapped; and shutting the door, he took his seat by the side of the coachman. The coachman stooped down for his orders.

"To the Champs Elysées," said the general; "the Count of Monte Cristo's. Quickly!"

The horses bounded beneath the whip, and in five minutes they stopped before the count's door. M. de Morcerf opened the door himself; and while the carriage was still moving, he sprang out into the walk, rang, and entered the open door with his servant.

A moment afterwards, Baptistin announced the Comte de Morcerf to M. de Monte Cristo; and the latter, leading Haydée aside, ordered the Comte de Morcerf to be asked into the drawing-room. The general was pacing the room the third time, when in turning he perceived Monte Cristo at the door.

"Eh! it is M. de Morcerf," said Monte Cristo, quietly; "I thought I had heard wrong."

"Yes, it is I," said the count, whom a frightful contraction of the lips prevented from articulating freely.

"May I know the cause which procures me the pleasure of seeing M. de Morcerf so early?"

"Had you not a meeting with my son this morning?" asked the general.

"You know that?" replied the count.

"And I know also that my son had good reasons to wish to fight with you, and to endeavour to kill you."

"Yes, monsieur, he had very good ones; but you see that in spite of them he has not killed me and did not even fight."

"Yet he considered you the cause of his father's dishonour,—the cause of the fearful ruin which has fallen on my house."

"It is true, monsieur," said Monte Cristo, with his terrible calmness; "a secondary cause, but not the principal."

"Doubtless you made, then, some apology or gave some explanation?"

"I explained nothing; and it is he who apologised to me."

"But to what do you attribute this conduct?"

"To the conviction, probably, that there was one more guilty than I."

"And who was that?"

"His father."

"That may be," said the count, turning pale; "but you know the guilty do not like to find themselves convicted."

"I know it; and I expected what has happened at this moment."

"You expected that my son would be a coward!" cried the count.

"M. Albert de Morcerf is no coward!" said Monte Cristo.

"A man who holds a sword in his hand, and sees a mortal enemy within reach of that sword, and does not fight, is a coward! Why is he not here that I may tell him so?"

"Monsieur," replied Monte Cristo, coldly, "I do not suppose that you have come here to relate to me your little family affairs. Go and tell M. Albert that, and he may know what to answer you."

"Oh, no, no!" said the general, with a smile that vanished immediately, "I did not come for that purpose; you are right! I came to tell you that I also look upon you as my enemy! I came to tell you that I hate you instinctively! that it seems as if I had always known you, and always hated you; and, in short, since the young people of the present day will not fight, that it remains for us to do it. Are you of that opinion, monsieur?"

"Certainly. And when I told you that I had foreseen what was taking place, I alluded to the honour of your visit."

"So much the better; your preparations are made, then?"

"They are always made, monsieur."

"You know that we shall fight till one of us is dead!" said the general, whose teeth were clinched with rage.

"Until one of us is dead," repeated Monte Cristo, moving his head slightly up and down.

"Let us start then; we need no witnesses."

"Truly," said Monte Cristo, "it is unnecessary, we know each other so well!"

"On the contrary," said the count, "we know so little of each other."

"Bah!" said Monte Cristo, with the same indomitable coolness; "let us see. Are you not the soldier Fernand who deserted on the eve of the battle of Waterloo? Are you not the Lieutenant Fernand who served as guide and spy to the French army in Spain? Are you not the Captain Fernand who betrayed, sold, and murdered his benefactor, Ali? And have not all these Fernands, united, made the Lieutenant-General de Morcerf, peer of France?"

"Oh!" cried the general, as if branded with a hot iron, "wretch! to reproach me with my shame when about perhaps to kill me! No, I did not say I was a stranger to you; I know well, demon, that you have penetrated into the darkness of the past, and that you have read, by the light of what torch I know not, every page of my life; but perhaps I may be more honourable in my shame than you under your pompous coverings. No, no, I am aware that you know me; but I know you not, adventurer, sewn up in gold and jewellery. You have called yourself at Paris the Count of Monte Cristo; in Italy, Sinbad the Sailor; in Malta, I know not what. But it is your real name that I want to know among your hundred names, that I may pronounce it when we meet to fight, at the moment when I plunge my sword through your heart."

The Count of Monte Cristo turned pale; his eye seemed to burn with a devouring fire. He bounded towards a dressing-room near his bedroom, and in less than a second, tearing off his cravat, his coat, and waistcoat, he put on a sailor's jacket and hat, from beneath which rolled his long black hair. He returned thus, formidable and implacable, advancing with his arms crossed on his breast towards the general, who could not understand why he had disappeared; but who on seeing him again, and feeling his teeth chatter and his legs sink under him, drew back, and only stopped when he found a table to support his clinched hand.

"Fernand!" cried the count, "of my hundred names I need

only tell you one to overwhelm you! But you guess it now, do you not,—or rather, you remember it? For notwithstanding all my sorrows and my tortures, I show you to-day a face which the happiness of revenge makes young again; a face you must often have seen in your dreams since your marriage—with Mercédès, my betrothed!"

The general, with his head thrown back, hands extended, gaze fixed, looked silently at this dreadful apparition; then seeking the wall to support him, he glided along close to it until he reached the door, through which he went out backwards, uttering this single mournful, lamentable, distressing cry, "Edmond Dantès!" Then, with sighs which were unlike any human sound, he dragged himself to the door, reeled across the courtyard, and falling into the arms of his valet, he said in a voice scarcely intelligible, "Home! home!" The fresh air and the shame he felt at having exposed himself before his servants, partially recalled his senses; but the ride was short, and as he drew near his house all his wretchedness revived. He stopped at a short distance from the house and alighted. The door of the house was wide open, a *fiacre* was standing in the middle of the yard,—a strange sight before so noble a mansion. The count looked at it with terror; but without daring to ask any questions, he rushed towards his apartment. Two persons were coming down the stairs; he had only time to creep into a cabinet to avoid them. It was Mercédès, leaning on her son's arm and leaving the house. They passed close by the unhappy being, who, concealed behind the damask door, almost felt Mercédès's dress brush against him, and his son's warm breath as he uttered the words, "Courage, my mother! Come, this is no longer our home!" The words died away; the steps were lost in the distance. The general drew himself up, clinging to the damask curtain; he uttered the most dreadful sob which ever escaped from the bosom of a father abandoned at the same time by his wife and son. He soon heard the clatter of the iron step of the carriage, then the coachman's voice, and then the rolling of the heavy vehicle shook the windows. He darted to his bedroom to see once more all that he had loved in the world; but the carriage drove on, and neither Mercédès's face nor Albert's appeared at the window to give to the deserted house, to the abandoned husband and father, the last look of adieu and regret,—that is to say, pardon. And at the very moment when the wheels of that coach crossed the gateway, a report was heard, and an ominous smoke escaped through one of the panes of the window, which was broken by the explosion.

CHAPTER XCIII

VALENTINE

We may easily conceive where Morrel's business called him and with whom was his appointment. On leaving Monte Cristo, he walked slowly towards Villefort's house; we say slowly, for Morrel had more than half an hour in which to go five hundred steps, but he had hastened to take leave of Monte Cristo because he wished to be alone with his thoughts. He knew his time well, —the hour when Valentine was giving Noirtier his breakfast, and was sure not to be disturbed in the performance of this pious duty. Noirtier and Valentine had given him leave to come twice a week, and he was now availing himself of that permission. He arrived; Valentine was expecting him. Uneasy, almost wild, she seized his hand and led him to her grandfather. This uneasiness, amounting almost to distraction, arose from the report Morcerf's adventure had made in the world; the affair of the opera was generally known. No one at Villefort's doubted that a duel would ensue from it. Valentine, with her woman's instinct, guessed that Morrel would be Monte Cristo's witness; and from the young man's well-known courage and his great affection for the count, she feared he would not content himself with the passive part assigned to him. We may easily understand how eagerly the particulars were asked for, given, and received; and Morrel could read an indescribable joy in the eyes of his beloved, when she knew that the termination of this affair was as happy as it was unexpected.

"Now," said Valentine, motioning to Morrel to sit down near her grandfather, while she took her seat on his footstool,—"now let us talk about our own affairs. You know, Maximilian, grandpapa once thought of leaving this house, and taking apartments away from M. de Villefort's."

"Yes," said Maximilian, "I recollect the project, of which I highly approved."

"Well," said Valentine, "you may approve again, for grandpapa is again thinking of it."

"Bravo!" said Maximilian.

"And do you know," said Valentine, "what reason grandpapa gives for leaving this house?" Noirtier looked at Valentine to impose silence, but she did not notice him; her looks, her eyes, her smile, were all for Morrel.

"Oh! whatever may be M. Noirtier's reason," answered Morrel, "I will readily believe it to be a good one."

"An excellent one!" said Valentine. "He pretends that the air of the Faubourg St. Honoré is not good for me."

"Indeed!" said Morrel; "in that M. Noirtier may be right; your health has not appeared good the last fortnight."

"Not very," said Valentine. "And grandpapa is become my physician; and I have the greatest confidence in him, because he knows everything."

"Do you then really suffer?" asked Morrel, quickly.

"Oh, it must not be called suffering; I feel a general uneasiness, that is all. I have lost my appetite, and my stomach feels to be struggling to become accustomed to something."

Noirtier did not lose a word of what Valentine said.

"And what treatment do you adopt for this singular complaint?"

"A very simple one," said Valentine. "I swallow every morning a spoonful of the mixture prepared for my grandfather. I say one spoonful,—I began by one, now I take four. Grandpapa says it is a panacea." Valentine smiled, but she evidently was suffering.

Maximilian, intoxicated with love, gazed silently at her. She was very beautiful, but her usual paleness had increased; her eyes were more brilliant than ever, and her hands, which were generally white like mother-of-pearl, now more resembled wax turned yellow with age. From Valentine the young man looked towards Noirtier. The latter watched with strange and deep interest the young girl, absorbed in her love; and he also, like Morrel, followed those traces of inward suffering which were so obscure that they escaped the notice of every one but the grandfather and the lover.

"But," said Morrel, "I thought this mixture, of which you now take four spoonfuls, was a medicine prescribed for M. Noirtier?"

"I know it is very bitter," said Valentine; "so bitter, that all I drink afterwards appears to have the same taste." Noirtier looked inquiringly at his granddaughter. "Yes, grandpapa," said Valentine; "it is so. Just now, before I came down to you, I drank a glass of *eau sucrée;* I left half, because it seemed so bitter."

Noirtier turned pale, and made a sign that he wished to speak. Valentine rose to fetch the dictionary. Noirtier watched her with evident anguish. In fact, the blood was rushing to the young girl's head; her cheeks were becoming red. "Oh!" she cried, without losing any of her cheerfulness, "this is singular!

A dimness! Did the sun shine in my eyes?" And she leaned against the window.

"The sun is not shining," said Morrel, more alarmed by Noirtier's expression than by Valentine's indisposition. He ran towards her.

The young girl smiled. "Comfort yourself!" said she to Noirtier. "Do not be alarmed, Maximilian; it is nothing, and has already passed away. But listen! Do I not hear a carriage in the courtyard?" She opened Noirtier's door, ran to a window in the passage, and returned hastily. "Yes," said she, "it is Madame Danglars and her daughter, who have come to call on us. *Adieu!* I must run away, for they would send here for me; or rather, *au revoir*. Stay with grandpapa, Maximilian; I promise you not to urge them to stay."

Morrel watched her as she left the room; he heard her ascend the little staircase which led both to Madame de Villefort's apartments and to hers. As soon as she was gone, Noirtier made a sign to Morrel to take the dictionary. Morrel obeyed; taught by Valentine, he had quickly learned how to understand the old man. Accustomed, however, as he was, and having to repeat most of the letters of the alphabet, and to find every word in the dictionary, it was ten minutes before the thought of the old man was translated by these words, "Fetch me the glass of water and the decanter from Valentine's room."

Morrel rang immediately for the servant who had succeeded to Barrois, and in Noirtier's name gave that order. The servant soon returned. The decanter and the glass were completely empty. Noirtier made a sign that he wished to speak. "Why are the glass and decanter empty?" asked he; "Valentine said she only drank half the glassful." The translation of this new question occupied another five minutes.

"I do not know," said the servant; "but the housemaid is in Mademoiselle Valentine's room. Perhaps she has emptied them."

"Ask her," said Morrel, translating Noirtier's thought this time by his look.

The servant went out, but returned almost immediately. "Mademoiselle Valentine passed through the room to go to Madame de Villefort's," said he, "and in passing, as she was thirsty, she drank what remained in the glass; as for the decanter, M. Edouard had emptied that to make a pond for his ducks." Noirtier raised his eyes to heaven, as a gambler does who stakes his all on one stroke. From that moment the old man's eyes were fixed on the door, and did not leave it.

It was indeed Madame Danglars and her daughter whom Valentine had seen; they had been ushered into Madame de Villefort's room, who had said she would receive them there. That is why Valentine passed through her room, which was on a level with that of her stepmother, and separated from it only by Edouard's. The two ladies entered the drawing-room with that sort of official stiffness which presages a formal communication. Among people of the world a shade of demeanour is quickly noticed; Madame de Villefort responded to that solemnity by being solemn herself. Valentine entered at this moment, and the formalities were resumed.

"My dear friend," said the baroness, while the two young people were shaking hands, "I have come with Eugénie to announce to you first the approaching marriage of my daughter with Prince Cavalcanti."

Danglars kept up the title of "prince." The popular banker found it answered better than "count."

"Allow me to present you my sincere congratulations," replied Madame de Villefort. "M. le Prince Cavalcanti appears to be a young man of rare qualities."

"Listen," said the baroness, smiling; "speaking to you as a friend, I would say that the prince does not yet appear all he will be. He has about him a little of that foreign manner by which French persons recognise at first sight the Italian or German nobleman. However, he gives evidence of great kindness of disposition, much keenness of wit, and as to suitableness, M. Danglars assures me his fortune is 'majestic,'—that is his term."

"And then," said Eugénie, while turning over the leaves of Madame de Villefort's album, "add, madame, that you have taken a great fancy to the young man."

"And," said Madame de Villefort, "I need not ask you if you share that fancy."

"I!" replied Eugénie, with her usual self-possession. "Oh, not the least in the world, madame! My wish was not to confine myself to domestic cares or the caprices of a man, but to be an artist, and consequently free in heart, in person, and in thought."

Eugénie pronounced these words with so firm a tone that the colour mounted to Valentine's cheeks. The timid girl could not understand that vigorous nature which appeared to have none of the timidities of woman.

"At any rate," said she, "since I am to be married whether I will or not, I ought to be thankful to Providence for having

released me from my engagement with M. Albert de Morcerf; but for that intervention I should this day have been the wife of a dishonoured man."

"It is true," said the baroness, with that strange simplicity sometimes met with among women of rank, and of which plebeian intercourse can never entirely deprive them,—"it is very true that had not the Morcerfs hesitated, my daughter would have married M. Albert. The general depended much on it; he even came to force M. Danglars. We have had a narrow escape."

"But," said Valentine, timidly, "does all the father's shame revert upon the son? M. Albert appears to me to be quite innocent of the treason charged against the general."

"Excuse me," said the implacable young girl; "M. Albert claims and well deserves his share. It appears that after having challenged M. de Monte Cristo at the opera yesterday, he apologised on the ground to-day."

"Impossible!" said Madame de Villefort.

"Ah, my dear friend," said Madame Danglars, with the same simplicity we before noticed, "it is a fact! I heard it from M. Debray, who was present at the explanation."

Valentine also knew the truth, but she did not answer. A single word had reminded her that Morrel was expecting her in M. Noirtier's room. Deeply engaged with a sort of inward contemplation, Valentine had ceased for a moment to join in the conversation. She would indeed have found it impossible to repeat what had been said the last few minutes, when suddenly Madame Danglars's hand, pressed on her arm, aroused her from her reverie.

"What is it?" said she, starting at Madame Danglars's touch as she would have done from an electric shock.

"It is, my dear Valentine," said the baroness, "that you are doubtless suffering."

"I?" said the young girl, passing her hand across her burning forehead.

"Yes, look at yourself in that glass; you have turned pale and red successively, three or four times in one minute."

"Indeed," cried Eugénie, "you are very pale!"

"Oh, do not be alarmed! I have been so for some days."

Artless as she was, the young girl knew that this was an opportunity to leave; besides, Madame de Villefort came to her assistance. "Retire, Valentine," said she; "you are really suffering, and these ladies will excuse you. Drink a glass of pure water; it will restore you."

Valentine kissed Eugénie, bowed to Madame Danglars, who had already risen to take her leave, and went out.

"That poor child!" said Madame de Villefort, when Valentine was gone; "she makes me very uneasy, and I should not be astonished if she had some serious illness."

Meanwhile, Valentine, in a sort of excitement which she could not quite understand, had crossed Edouard's room without noticing some trick of the child, and through her own had reached the little staircase. She went down all the steps but three; she already heard Morrel's voice, when suddenly a cloud passed over her eyes, her stiffened foot missed the step, her hands had no power to hold the baluster, and falling against the wall, she rolled down the three remaining steps. Morrel bounded to the door, opened it, and found Valentine extended on the floor. Quick as lightning, he raised her in his arms and placed her in a chair. Valentine opened her eyes.

"Oh, what a clumsy thing I am!" said she, with feverish volubility; "I no longer know my way. I forgot there were three more steps before the landing."

"You have hurt yourself, perhaps," said Morrel. "What can I do for you, Valentine?"

Valentine looked round her; she saw the deepest terror depicted in Noirtier's eyes. "Comfort yourself, dear grandpapa," said she, endeavouring to smile. "It is nothing—it is nothing; I was giddy, that is all."

"Another giddiness!" said Morrel, clasping his hands. "Oh, attend to it, Valentine, I entreat you!"

"But no," said Valentine,—"no, I tell you it is all past, and it was nothing. Now, let me tell you some news. Eugénie is to be married in a week, and in three days there is to be a grand feast, a sort of betrothing festival. We are all invited, my father, Madame de Villefort, and I,—at least I understood it so."

"When will it, then, be our turn to think of these things? Oh, Valentine, you, who have so much influence over your grandpapa, try to make him answer, 'Soon.'"

"And do you," said Valentine, "depend on me to stimulate the tardiness and arouse the memory of grandpapa?"

"Yes," cried Morrel, "be quick! So long as you are not mine, Valentine, I shall always think I may lose you."

"Oh!" replied Valentine, with a convulsive movement, "oh, indeed, Maximilian, you are too timid for an officer, for a soldier, who, they say, never knows fear. Ha! ha! ha!" She burst into a noisy and distressing laugh; her arm stiffened

and twisted; her head fell back on her chair, and she remained motionless. The cry of terror which was stopped on Noirtier's lips, seemed to start from his eyes. Morrel understood it; he knew he must call assistance. The young man rang the bell violently; the housemaid who had been in Mademoiselle Valentine's room, and the servant who had replaced Barrois, ran in at the same moment. Valentine was so pale, so cold, so inanimate that without listening to what was said to them, they were seized with the fear which pervaded that house, and flew into the passage crying for help. Madame Danglars and Eugénie were going out at that moment; they heard the cause of the disturbance.

"I told you so!" cried Madame de Villefort. "Poor child!"

CHAPTER XCIV

THE CONFESSION

At the same time M. de Villefort's voice was heard calling from his cabinet, "What is the matter?" Morrel consulted Noirtier's look, who had recovered his self-command, and with a glance indicated the closet, where once before, under somewhat similar circumstances, he had taken refuge. He had only time to get his hat, and throw himself breathless into the closet; the *procureur's* footstep was heard in the passage. Villefort sprang into the room, ran to Valentine, and took her in his arms. "A physician! a physician! M. d'Avrigny!" cried Villefort; "or rather, I will go for him myself."

He flew from the apartment, and Morrel at the same moment darted out at the other door. He had been struck to the heart by a frightful recollection,—the conversation he had heard between the doctor and Villefort the night of Madame de Saint-Méran's death recurred to him; these symptoms, to a less alarming extent, were the same which had preceded the death of Barrois. At the same time Monte Cristo's voice seemed to resound in his ear, who had said only two hours before, "Whatever you want, Morrel, come to me; I have great power." More rapid than thought, he darted down the Rue Matignon, and thence to the Avenue des Champs Elysées.

Meanwhile M. de Villefort arrived in a hired cabriolet at M. d'Avrigny's door. He rang so violently that the porter came, alarmed. Villefort ran upstairs without saying a word. The porter knew him, and let him pass, only calling to him, "In his

cabinet, M. le Procureur du roi; in his cabinet!" Villefort pushed, or rather forced the door open.

"Ah!" said the doctor, "is it you?"

"Yes," said Villefort, closing the door after him, "it is I, who am come in my turn to ask you if we are quite alone. Doctor, my house is accursed!"

"What!" said the latter, with apparent coolness, but with deep emotion, "have you another invalid?"

"Yes, doctor," cried Villefort, seizing with a convulsive grasp a handful of hair, "yes!"

D'Avrigny's look implied, "I told you it would be so." Then he slowly uttered these words, "Who is now dying in your house? What new victim is going to accuse you of weakness before God?"

A mournful sob burst from Villefort's heart; he approached the doctor, and seizing his arm, "Valentine!" said he, "it is Valentine's turn!"

"Your daughter?" cried D'Avrigny, with grief and surprise.

"You see you were deceived," murmured the magistrate; "come and see her, and on her bed of agony entreat her pardon for having suspected her."

"Each time you have applied to me," said the doctor, "it has been too late; still, I will go. But let us make haste, monsieur; with the enemies you have to do with, there is no time to be lost."

"Oh, this time, doctor, you shall not have to reproach me with weakness. This time I will know the assassin, and I will strike."

"Let us try first to save the victim before we think of revenging her," said D'Avrigny. "Come."

The same cabriolet which had brought Villefort started off with them at full speed at the moment that Morrel was rapping at Monte Cristo's door.

The count was in his cabinet, and was reading with an anxious look something which Bertuccio had brought in haste. Hearing Morrel announced, who had left him only two hours before, the count raised his head. He, as well as the count, had evidently been much tried during those two hours, for he had left him smiling, and returned with a distracted appearance. The count rose and sprang to meet him. "What is the matter, Maximilian?" asked he; "you are pale, and the perspiration rolls from your forehead."

Morrel fell, rather than sat, on a chair. "Yes," said he, "I came quickly; I wanted to speak to you."

"Are all your family well?" asked the count, with an affectionate benevolence, whose sincerity no one could for a moment doubt.

"Thank you, count, thank you," said the young man, evidently finding difficulty in beginning the conversation; "yes, every one in my family is well."

"So much the better; yet you have something to tell me?" replied the count, with increased anxiety.

"Yes," said Morrel, "it is true; I have left a house where death has entered, to run to you."

"Are you then come from M. de Morcerf's?" asked Monte Cristo.

"No," said Morrel; "is some one dead in his house?"

"The general has just blown his brains out," replied Monte Cristo, with great coolness.

"Oh, what a frightful calamity!" cried Maximilian.

"Not for the countess, nor for Albert," said Monte Cristo; "a dead father or husband is better than a dishonoured one,—blood washes out shame."

"Poor countess!" said Maximilian, "I pity her very much,—so noble a woman!"

"Pity Albert also, Maximilian; for, believe me, he is the worthy son of the countess. But let us return to yourself. You have hastened to me; can I have the happiness of being useful to you?"

"Yes, I need your help; that is, I thought, like a madman, you could lend me your assistance in a case where God alone can help me."

"Tell me what it is," replied Monte Cristo.

"Oh!" said Morrel, "I know not indeed if I may reveal this secret to mortal ears; but fatality impels me, necessity constrains me, count—" He hesitated.

"Do you think I love you?" said Monte Cristo, taking the young man's hand affectionately in his.

"Oh, you encourage me! and something tells me there," placing his hand on his heart, "that I ought to have no secret from you."

"You are right, Morrel; God is speaking to your heart, and your heart speaks to you. Tell me what it says."

"Count, will you allow me to send Baptistin to inquire after some one you know?"

"I am at your service, and still more, my servants are."

"Oh! I cannot live if I do not hear that she is better."

"Shall I ring for Baptistin?"

"No, I will go and speak to him myself."

Morrel went out, called Baptistin, and whispered a few words to him. The valet departed in haste.

"Well, have you sent?" asked Monte Cristo, seeing Morrel return.

"Yes, and now I shall be more calm."

"You know I am waiting," said Monte Cristo, smiling.

"Yes, and I will tell you. One evening I was in a garden. A clump of trees concealed me; no one suspected I was there. Two persons passed near me,—allow me to conceal their names for the present; they were speaking in an undertone, and yet I was so interested in what they said that I did not lose a single word."

"This is a gloomy introduction, if I may judge from your paleness and shuddering, Morrel."

"Oh, yes, very gloomy, my friend! Some one had just died in the house to which that garden belonged. One of those persons whose conversation I overheard was the master of the house, the other the physician. The former was confiding to the latter his grief and fear; for it was the second time within a month that death had entered suddenly and unexpectedly that house, apparently destined to destruction by some exterminating angel as an object of God's anger."

"Ah, ah!" said Monte Cristo, looking earnestly at the young man, and by an imperceptible movement turning his chair, so that he remained in the shade while the light fell full on Maximilian's face.

"Yes," continued Morrel, "death had entered that house twice within one month."

"And what did the doctor answer?" asked Monte Cristo.

"He replied—he replied that the death was not a natural one, and must be attributed—"

"To what?"

"To poison."

"Indeed!" said Monte Cristo, with a slight cough, which in moments of extreme emotion helped him to conceal a blush, or his paleness, or the intense interest with which he listened,—"indeed, Maximilian, did you hear that?"

"Yes, my dear count, I heard it; and the doctor added that if another death occurred in a similar way, he must appeal to justice." Monte Cristo listened, or appeared to do so, with the greatest calmness. "Well!" said Maximilian, "death came a third time, and neither the master of the house nor the doctor said a word. Death is now perhaps striking a fourth

blow. Count, what am I bound to do, being in possession of this secret?"

"My dear friend," said Monte Cristo, "you appear to be relating a story which we all know by heart. I know the house where you heard that, or at least one very like it,—a house with a garden, a master, a physician, and where there have been three unexpected and sudden deaths. Well; I have not overheard any secret confidences, and yet I know all that as well as you, and I have no conscientious scruples. No, it does not concern me. You say that an exterminating angel appears to have devoted that house to God's anger; well! who says your supposition is not reality? Do not notice things which those whose interest it is to see them pass over. If it is God's justice, instead of his anger, which is walking through that house, Maximilian, turn away your face, and allow room for the justice of God." Morrel shuddered. There was something mournful, solemn, and terrible in the count's manner. "Besides," continued he, in so changed a tone that no one would have supposed it was the same person speaking,—"besides, who says that it will begin again?"

"It has begun again, count!" exclaimed Morrel; "that is why I hastened to you."

"Well! what do you wish me to do? Do you wish me, for instance, to give information to the *procureur du roi*?"

Monte Cristo uttered the last words with so much meaning that Morrel, starting up, cried out, "You know of whom I speak, count, do you not?"

"Perfectly well, my good friend; and I will prove it to you by putting dots to the *i's*, or rather, by naming the persons. You were walking one evening in M. de Villefort's garden; from what you relate, I suppose it to have been the evening of Madame de Saint-Méran's death. You heard M. de Villefort talking to M. d'Avrigny about the death of M. de Saint-Méran, and that no less surprising of the marchioness. M. d'Avrigny said that he believed they both proceeded from poison; and you, honest man, have ever since been asking your heart, and sounding your conscience, to know if you ought to expose or conceal this secret. We are not now in the Middle Ages, dear friend, and there is no longer a Holy Vehme; there are free judges no longer. What in the devil have you to do with those persons? 'Conscience, what hast thou to do with me?' as Sterne says. My dear fellow, let them sleep on if they are asleep; let them grow pale in their wakefulness if they are wakeful; and for the love of God, remain in peace, who have no remorse to disturb you!"

Deep grief was depicted on Morrel's features; he seized Monte Cristo's hand. "But it is beginning again, I say!"

"Well!" said the count, astonished at his perseverance, which he could not understand, and looking still more earnestly at Maximilian, "let it begin again. It is a family of Atrides; God has condemned them, and they must submit to their punishment. They will all disappear like the fabrics children build with cards, and which fall, one by one, under the breath of their builder, even if there are two hundred of them. Three months since, it was M. de Saint-Méran; Madame de Saint-Méran two months since; the other day, it was Barrois; to-day, the old Noirtier, or young Valentine."

"You knew it?" cried Morrel, in such a paroxysm of terror that Monte Cristo started,—he whom the falling heavens would have found unmoved; "you knew it, and said nothing?"

"And what is it to me?" replied Monte Cristo, shrugging his shoulders. "Do I know those people; and must I lose the one to save the other? Faith, no, for between the culprit and the victim I have no choice."

"But I," cried Morrel, groaning with sorrow,—"I love her!"

"You love?—whom?" cried Monte Cristo, starting on his feet, and seizing the two hands which Morrel was raising towards heaven.

"I love desperately—I love madly—I love as a man who would give his life-blood to spare her a tear—I love Valentine de Villefort, whom they are murdering at this moment! Do you understand me? I love her; and I ask God and you how I can save her?"

Monte Cristo uttered a cry which those only can conceive who have heard the roar of a wounded lion. "Unhappy man!" cried he, wringing his hands in his turn; "you love Valentine! —that daughter of an accursed race!" Never had Morrel witnessed such an expression; never had so terrible an eye flashed before his face; never had the genius of terror he had so often seen on the battlefield or in the murderous nights of Algeria, shaken around him more ominous flames. He drew back terrified.

As for Monte Cristo, after this ebullition he closed his eyes for a moment, as if dazzled by internal light. In a moment he had restrained himself so powerfully that the tempestuous heaving of his breast subsided, as turbulent and foaming waves yield to the sun's genial influence when the cloud has passed. This silence, struggle, and self-control lasted about twenty seconds; then the count raised his pallid face. "See," said he, "my dear friend, how God punishes the most thoughtless and un-

feeling men for their indifference before the terrible scenes which he presents to their view. I, who was looking on, an unmoved and curious spectator; I, who was watching the working of this mournful tragedy; I, who like a wicked angel was laughing at the evil men committed, protected by secrecy (a secret is easily kept by the rich and powerful),—I am in my turn bitten by the serpent whose tortuous course I was watching, and bitten to the heart!"

Morrel groaned.

"Come, come," continued the count, "complaints are unavailing! be a man, be strong, be full of hope, for I am here, and will watch over you."

Morrel shook his head sorrowfully.

"I tell you to hope. Do you understand me?" cried Monte Cristo. "Remember that I never utter a falsehood and am never deceived. It is twelve o'clock, Maximilian; thank Heaven that you came at noon rather than in the evening, or to-morrow morning! Listen, Morrel!—it is noon; if Valentine is not now dead, she will not die."

"How so?" cried Morrel, "when I left her dying?"

Monte Cristo pressed his hands to his forehead. What was passing in that brain, so loaded with dreadful secrets? What does the angel of light, or the angel of darkness, say to that mind, at once implacable and generous? God only knows.

Monte Cristo raised his head once more, and this time he was calm as a child awaking from its sleep. "Maximilian," said he, "return home. I command you not to stir, not to attempt anything, not to let your countenance betray a thought; I will send you tidings. Go!"

"Oh, count, you terrify me with that coolness. Have you, then, power against death? Are you superhuman? Are you an angel? Are you a God?" And the young man, who had never shrunk from danger, shrank before Monte Cristo with indescribable terror. But Monte Cristo looked at him with so melancholy and sweet a smile that Maximilian felt the tears filling his eyes.

"I can do much for you, my friend," replied the count. "Go; I must be alone."

Morrel, subdued by the extraordinary ascendency Monte Cristo exercised over everything around him, did not endeavour to resist it. He pressed the count's hand and left. He stopped one moment at the door for Baptistin, whom he saw in the Rue Matignon, and who was running.

Meanwhile Villefort and D'Avrigny had made all possible

haste. Valentine had not revived from her fainting fit on their arrival; and the doctor examined the invalid with all the care the circumstances demanded, and with an interest intensified by his knowledge of the secret. Villefort, closely watching his countenance and his lips, waited the result of the examination. Noirtier, paler than even the young girl, more eager than Villefort for the decision, was watching also intently and affectionately. At last D'Avrigny slowly uttered these words, "She is still alive!"

"Still?" cried Villefort; "oh, doctor, what a terrible word is that!"

"Yes," said the physician, "I repeat it; she is still alive, and I am astonished at it."

"But is she safe?" asked the father.

"Yes, since she lives."

At that moment D'Avrigny's glance met Noirtier's eye. It glistened with a joy so marked, with a meaning so strong and suggestive that the physician's attention was arrested. He placed the young girl again on the chair; her lips were scarcely discernible, they were so pale and white, like her face. He then stood motionless, looking at Noirtier, who appeared to anticipate and commend all he did.

"Monsieur," said D'Avrigny to Villefort, "call Mademoiselle Valentine's maid, if you please."

Villefort went himself to find her, and D'Avrigny approached Noirtier. "Have you something to tell me?" asked he.

The old man winked his eyes expressively, which we may remember was his only sign of affirmation.

"Privately?"

"Yes."

"Well, I will remain with you." At this moment Villefort returned, followed by the lady's-maid; and after her came Madame de Villefort.

"What is the matter, then, with this dear child? She went out from my room complaining of illness, but I supposed it was nothing serious." And the young woman, with tears in her eyes and all indications of the affection of a true mother, approached Valentine and took her hand. D'Avrigny continued to look at Noirtier; he saw the eyes of the old man dilate and become round, his cheeks turn pale and tremble; the perspiration stood in drops upon his forehead. "Ah!" said he, involuntarily following Noirtier's eyes, which were fixed on Madame de Villefort, who repeated, "This poor child would be better in bed. Come, Fanny, we will put her in."

M. d'Avrigny, who saw in that proposition a way to his remaining alone with Noirtier, expressed his opinion that it was the best thing that could be done; but he forbade anything being given to her except what he might direct.

They carried Valentine away; she had revived, but could scarcely move or speak, so shaken was her frame by the attack. She was able, however, to give her grandfather one parting look; who, in losing her, seemed to be resigning his very soul. D'Avrigny followed the invalid, wrote a prescription, ordered Villefort to take a cabriolet, go in person to a chemist's to get the prescribed medicine, bring it himself, and wait for him in his daughter's room. Then, having renewed his injunction not to give Valentine anything, he went down again to Noirtier, shut the doors carefully, and after convincing himself no one was listening, "Now," said he, "you know something about this illness of your granddaughter?"

"Yes," said the old man.

"We have no time to lose; I will question, and do you answer me."

Noirtier made a sign that he was ready to answer.

"Did you anticipate the accident which has happened to Valentine?"

"Yes."

D'Avrigny reflected a moment; then approaching Noirtier, "Pardon what I am going to say," added he, "but no indication should be neglected in this terrible situation. Did you see poor Barrois die?"

Noirtier raised his eyes to heaven.

"Do you know of what he died?" asked D'Avrigny, placing his hand on Noirtier's shoulder.

"Yes," replied the old man.

"Do you think he died a natural death?"

A sort of smile was discernible on the motionless lips of Noirtier.

"Then you have thought Barrois was poisoned?"

"Yes."

"Do you think the poison to which he fell a victim was intended for him?"

"No."

"Do you think the same hand which unintentionally struck Barrois has now attacked Valentine?"

"Yes."

"Then will she die, too?" asked D'Avrigny, fixing his penetrating gaze on Noirtier. He watched the effect of this question on the old man.

"No!" replied he, with an air of triumph which would puzzle the most clever diviner.

"Then you hope?" said D'Avrigny, with surprise.

"Yes."

"What do you hope?" The old man made him understand with his eyes that he could not answer. "Ah, yes, it is true!" murmured D'Avrigny. Then, turning to Noirtier, "Do you hope that the assassin will become weary?"

"No."

"Then you hope that the poison will take no effect on Valentine?"

"Yes."

"It is no news to you," added D'Avrigny, "to tell you that an attempt has been made to poison her?"

The old man made a sign that he entertained no doubt upon the subject.

"Then how do you hope that Valentine will escape?"

Noirtier kept his eyes fixed steadily on the same spot. D'Avrigny followed the direction, and saw that they were fixed on a bottle containing the mixture which he took every morning. "Ah, ah!" said D'Avrigny, struck with a sudden thought, "has it occurred to you—"

Noirtier did not let him finish. "Yes," said he.

"To prepare her system to resist poison?"

"Yes."

"By accustoming her gradually—"

"Yes, yes, yes," said Noirtier, delighted to be understood.

"In fact, you heard me say that there was brucine in the mixture I give you?"

"Yes."

"And by accustoming her to that poison, you have endeavoured to neutralise the effect of a similar poison?"

Noirtier's joy continued.

"And you have succeeded!" exclaimed D'Avrigny. "Without that precaution Valentine would have died before assistance could have been procured. The dose has been excessive, but she has been only shaken by it; and this time, at any rate, Valentine will not die."

A superhuman joy expanded the old man's eyes, which were raised towards heaven with an expresson of infinite gratitude. At this moment Villefort returned. "Here, doctor," said he, "is what you sent me for."

"Was this prepared in your presence?"

"Yes," replied the *procureur du roi.*

"Have you not let it go out of your hands?"

"No."

D'Avrigny took the bottle, poured some drops of the mixture it contained in the hollow of his hand, and swallowed them. "Well," said he, "let us go to Valentine; I will give instructions to every one, and you, M. de Villefort, will yourself see that no one deviates from them."

At the moment when D'Avrigny was returning to Valentine's room, accompanied by Villefort, an Italian priest, of serious demeanour and calm and firm manner of speech, hired for his use the house adjoining that of M. de Villefort. No one knew by what proceeding the three tenants of that house were induced to leave on two hours' notice; but the rumour which circulated in the quarter was that the house was not firm on its foundation, and threatened to fall,—which, however, did not prevent the new tenant from establishing himself there with his modest furniture the same day at about five o'clock. The lease was drawn up for three, six, or nine years by the new tenant, who, according to the rule of the proprietor, paid six months in advance. This new tenant, who, as we have said, was an Italian, was called Signor Giacomo Busoni. Workmen were immediately called in; and the same night the passengers at the end of the faubourg saw with surprise carpenters and masons occupied in repairing the underpinning of the tottering house.

CHAPTER XCV

THE FATHER AND DAUGHTER

We have seen in a preceding chapter Madame Danglars coming formally to announce to Madame de Villefort the approaching marriage of Eugénie Danglars and M. Andrea Cavalcanti. This announcement, which implied, or appeared to imply a resolution taken by all the parties concerned in this great affair, had been preceded by a scene to which our readers must be admitted. We beg them to take one step backwards, and to transport themselves, on the morning of that day of great catastrophes, into the beautifully gilded salon we have before shown them, and which was the pride of its owner, the Baron Danglars. In this room, at about ten o'clock in the morning, the banker himself had been walking some minutes, thoughtful, and evidently uneasy, watching each door, and listening to every sound. When his patience was exhausted, he called his

valet. "Etienne," said he, "see why Mademoiselle Eugénie has asked me to meet her in the drawing-room, and why she makes me wait so long."

Having given this vent to his ill-humour, the baron became more calm. Mademoiselle Danglars had that morning requested an interview with her father, and had fixed on the drawing-room as the place for that interview. The singularity of this step, and, above all, its formal character, had not a little surprised the banker, who had immediately obeyed his daughter by repairing first to the drawing-room. Etienne soon returned from his errand. "Mademoiselle's maid," said he, "has informed me that mademoiselle is finishing her toilette, and will be here shortly."

Danglars nodded, to signify that he was satisfied. To the world and to his servants Danglars affected the good-natured man and the indulgent father. This was one of his characters in the popular comedy he was performing; it was a physiognomy he had adopted, and which appeared as suitable to him as it was to the profile masks of fathers in the ancient theatres to have on the right side the turned-up and laughing lip, while on the left side it was drawn down and ill-tempered. Let us hasten to say that in private the turned-up and laughing lip descended to the level of the drawn-down and ill-tempered one; so that generally the indulgent man disappeared to give place to the brutal husband and domineering father. "Why the devil does that foolish girl, who pretends to wish to speak to me, not come into my cabinet; and why does she want to speak to me at all?"

He was revolving this disquieting question in his brain for the twentieth time, when the door opened, and Eugénie appeared, attired in a figured black satin dress, her hair arranged, and gloves on, as if going to the Italian opera.

"Well, Eugénie, what is it you want with me; and why in this solemn drawing-room when the cabinet is so comfortable?"

"You are right, monsieur," answered Eugénie, making a sign to her father that he might sit down, "and have proposed two questions which include all the conversation we are going to have. I will answer them both, and contrary to the usual method, the last first, as being the least complex. I have chosen the drawing-room, monsieur, as our place of meeting, in order to avoid the disagreeable impressions and influences of a banker's cabinet. Those cash-books, gilded as they may be, those drawers, locked like gates of fortresses, those heaps of bank-bills, which come from I know not where, and those piles of

letters from England, Holland, Spain, India, China, and Peru, have generally a strange influence on a father's mind, and make him forget that there is in the world an interest greater and more sacred than social position and the good opinion of his correspondents. I have therefore chosen this drawing-room, where you see smiling and happy in their magnificent frames your portrait, mine, my mother's, and all sorts of rural landscapes and touching pastorals. I rely much on external impressions. Perhaps, especially in an interview with you, this is a mistake; but I should be no artist if I had not some illusions."

"Very well," replied M. Danglars, who had listened to this tirade with imperturbable coolness, but without understanding a word, engaged as he was, like every man full of secret plans, in seeking the thread of his own ideas in those of the speaker.

"There is, then, the second point cleared up, or nearly so," said Eugénie, without the least confusion, and with that masculine assurance which distinguished her gesture and her language; "and you appear satisfied with the explanation. Now let us return to the first: You ask me why I have requested this interview; I will tell you in two words, monsieur,—I will not marry M. le Comte Andrea Cavalcanti."

Danglars bounded from his chair, at the same time raising his eyes and his arms towards heaven.

"Yes, indeed, monsieur," continued Eugénie, still quite calm. "You are astonished, I see; for while this little affair has been in progress I have not manifested the slightest opposition,—sure, as I always am, when the opportunity arrives, to oppose to people who have not consulted me, and things which displease me, a determined and absolute will. However, this time this tranquillity, this passivity, as the philosophers call it, proceeded from another source; it proceeded from a wish, like a submissive and devoted daughter [a slight smile was observable on the purple lips of the young girl], to practise obedience."

"Well?" asked Danglars.

"Well, monsieur," continued Eugénie, "I have tried to the very end of my strength; and now that the time has arrived, I find, in spite of all the efforts I have made, that further obedience is impossible."

"But," said Danglars, who, with his inferior intellect, seemed at first quite overwhelmed with the weight of this pitiless logic, indicating premeditation and force of will, "what is your reason for this refusal, Eugénie, what reason?"

"My reason?" replied the young girl. "Well! it is not that the man is more ugly, more foolish, or more disagreeable

than any other; no, M. Andrea Cavalcanti may even pass with those who look at men's faces and figures as a very good model. It is not, either, that my heart is less touched by him than any other,—that would be a school-girl's reason, which I consider quite beneath me. I actually love no one, monsieur; you know it, do you not? I do not, then, see why, without real necessity, I should encumber my life with a perpetual companion. Has not some sage said, 'seek nothing that you do not need;' and another, 'have everything within yourself'? I have been taught these two aphorisms in Latin and in Greek; one is, I believe, from Phædrus, and the other from Bias. Well, my dear father, in the shipwreck of life—for life is an eternal shipwreck of our hopes—I cast into the sea my useless encumbrance, that is all; and I remain with my own will, disposed to live perfectly alone, and consequently perfectly free."

"Unhappy girl! unhappy girl!" murmured Danglars, turning pale, for he knew, from long experience, the solidity of the obstacle which he had so suddenly encountered.

"Unhappy!" replied Eugénie, "unhappy, do you say, monsieur? By no means; and the exclamation seems to me altogether theatrical and affected. Happy, on the contrary; for, I ask you, what is wanting in my situation? The world calls me beautiful, and that helps me to be well received. I like a favourable reception; it expands the countenance, and those around me do not then appear so ugly. I possess a share of wit, and a certain relative sensibility, which enables me to draw from life in general, and absorb into my own life, all the good that I find,—like the monkey who cracks the nut to get at its contents. I am rich, for you have one of the first fortunes in France; I am your only daughter, and you are not so tenacious as the fathers of La Porte St. Martin and La Gaîté, who disinherit their daughters because they will give them no grandchildren. Besides, the provident law has deprived you of the power to disinherit me,—at least, entirely,—as it has also of the power to compel me to marry a particular person. Thus, beautiful, witty, somewhat talented, as the comic operas say, and rich,—that is happiness, monsieur; why, then, do you call me unhappy?"

Danglars, seeing his daughter smiling and proud even to insolence, could not entirely repress an angry impulse, which, however, betrayed itself only by an exclamation. Under the inquiring gaze of his daughter, before those beautiful black eyebrows contracted by a questioning expression, he prudently turned away, and calmed himself immediately, controlled by the iron hand of circumspection. "Indeed, my daughter,"

replied he, with a smile, "you are all you boast of being, excepting one thing; I will not too hastily tell you which, but would rather leave you to discover it."

Eugénie looked at Danglars, much surprised that one flower of her crown of pride, with which she had so superbly decked herself, should be disputed.

"My daughter," continued the banker, "you have perfectly explained to me the sentiments which influence a girl like you who is determined not to marry; now it remains for me to tell you the motives of a father like me, who has decided that his daughter shall marry."

Eugénie bowed, not as a submissive daughter, but as an adversary prepared for a discussion.

"My daughter," continued Danglars, "when a father asks his daughter to choose a husband, he has always some reason for wishing her to marry. Some are affected with the mania to which you alluded just now,—that of living again in their grandchildren. This is not my weakness, I tell you at once; family joys have no charm for me. I may acknowledge this to a daughter whom I know to be philosophical enough to understand my indifference, and not to impute it to me as a crime."

"Very good," said Eugénie; "let us speak candidly, monsieur,—that is what I like."

"Oh!" said Danglars; "I can, when circumstances render it desirable, adopt your system, although it may not be my general practice. I will therefore proceed. I have proposed to you to marry, not for your sake, for indeed I did not think of you in the least at the moment (you admire candour, and will now be satisfied, I hope), but because it suited me to marry you as soon as possible, on account of certain commercial speculations I am desirous of entering into." Eugénie made a movement. "It is just so, I assure you, and you must not be angry with me; for you have sought this disclosure. I do not willingly enter into all these arithmetical explanations with an artist like you, who fear to enter my cabinet lest you should imbibe disagreeable or anti-poetic impressions and sensations. But in that same banker's cabinet, where you very willingly presented yourself yesterday to ask for the thousand livres which I give you monthly for pocket-money, you must know, my dear young lady, many things may be learned, useful even to a girl who will not marry. There one may learn, for instance, what, out of regard to your nervous susceptibility, I will inform you of in the drawing-room, namely, that the credit of a banker is his physical and moral life; that credit sustains him as breath

animates the body; and M. de Monte Cristo once gave me a lecture on that subject which I have never forgotten. There one may learn that as credit is withdrawn, the body becomes lifeless; and this is what must happen very soon to the banker who has the honour of being father to a daughter so excellently logical."

But Eugénie, instead of stooping, drew herself up under the blow. "Ruined!" said she.

"You have hit on the fitting expression, my daughter, the appropriate word," said Danglars, digging his nails into his breast, while he preserved on his harsh features the smile of the heartless though clever man; "ruined! yes, that is it."

"Ah!" said Eugénie.

"Yes, ruined! now it is revealed, this secret so full of horror, as the tragic poet says. Now, my daughter, learn from my lips how you may alleviate this misfortune, so far as it will affect you."

"Oh," cried Eugénie, "you are a bad physiognomist, monsieur, if you imagine that I deplore on my own account the catastrophe you announce to me. I ruined! and what will that signify to me? Have I not my talent left? Can I not, like Pasta, Malibran, Grisi, acquire for myself what you would never have given me, whatever might have been your fortune,—a hundred or a hundred and fifty thousand livres per annum, for which I shall be indebted to no one but myself; and which, instead of being given as you gave me those poor twelve thousand livres, with pouting looks and reproaches for my prodigality, will be accompanied with acclamations, with bravos, and with flowers? And if I do not possess that talent, which your smile shows me that you doubt, should I not still have that furious love of independence, which will be to me a substitute for all treasure, and which in my mind supersedes even the instinct of self-preservation? No, I grieve not on my own account,—I shall always find resources; my books, my pencils, my piano, all those things which cost but little, and which I shall be able to procure, will remain my own. You think perhaps I am concerned for Madame Danglars. Undeceive yourself again; either I am greatly mistaken, or she has provided against the catastrophe which threatens you, and which will pass over without affecting her. She has taken care of herself,—at least, I hope so,—and her attention has not been diverted from her projects by watching over me; for, thank God, she has left me all my independence, under the pretext that I desired freedom. Oh, no, monsieur; from my childhood I have seen too much and

understood too much of what has taken place around me for misfortune to have an undue power over me. From my earliest recollections I have been beloved by no one,—so much the worse! That has naturally led me to love no one,—so much the better! Now you have my profession of faith."

"Then," said Danglars, pale with anger, which did not arise from offended paternal love,—"then, mademoiselle, you persist in your determination to accelerate my ruin?"

"Your ruin? I accelerate your ruin? What do you mean? I do not understand you."

"So much the better, I have a ray of hope left; listen."

"I am all attention," said Eugénie, looking so earnestly at her father that it was an effort to the latter to bear her powerful gaze.

"M. Cavalcanti," continued Danglars, "is about to marry you, and will place in my hands his fortune, amounting to three million livres."

"That is admirable!" said Eugénie, with sovereign contempt, smoothing her gloves out one upon the other.

"You think I shall deprive you of those three millions," said Danglars; "but do not fear it. They are destined to produce at least ten. I have obtained with another banker, my colleague, a grant of a railway,—the only industry which at the present time offers those fabulous chances of immediate profit which formerly Law contrived for the good Parisians (those eternal nibblers at speculation) in a wild-cat Mississippi scheme. According to my calculation, one may own a millionth of a railroad, as he would own on the former plan an acre of virgin land on the banks of the Ohio. It is a mortgage investment,—which, you see, is an improvement; since one will have in exchange for his money at least ten, fifteen, twenty, or a hundred pounds of iron. Well, within a week I am to deposit four millions for my share; these four millions, I promise you, will produce ten or twelve."

"But during my visit to you the day before yesterday, monsieur, which you appear to recollect so well," replied Eugénie, "I saw you receive—is not that the term?—five millions and a half; you even showed them to me in two drafts on the treasury, and you were astonished that so valuable a paper did not dazzle my eyes like lightning."

"Yes, but those five millions and a half are not mine, and are only a proof of the confidence placed in me; my title of popular banker has gained me the confidence of the hospitals, and the five millions and a half belong to the hospitals. At

any other time I should not have hesitated to make use of them, but the great losses I have recently sustained are well known, and, as I told you, my credit is rather shaken. That deposit may be at any moment withdrawn, and if I had employed it for another purpose, I should bring on myself a disgraceful bankruptcy. I do not despise bankruptcies, believe me; but they must be bankruptcies which enrich, not those which ruin. Now, if you marry M. Cavalcanti, and I touch the three millions, or even if it is thought I am going to touch them, my credit will be restored; and my fortune, which for the last month or two has been swallowed up in gulfs which have been opened in my path by an inconceivable fatality, will be re-established. Do you understand me?"

"Perfectly; you pledge me for three millions, do you not?"

"The greater the amount, the more flattering it is to you; it gives you an idea of your value."

"Thank you. One word more, monsieur; do you promise me to make what use you can of the report of the fortune M. Cavalcanti will bring, without touching the sum? This is not a matter of selfishness, but of delicacy. I am willing to help rebuild your fortune; but I will not be an accomplice in the ruin of others."

"But since I tell you," cried Danglars, "that with these three millions—"

"Do you expect to recover your position, monsieur, without touching those three millions?"

"I hope so, if the marriage should take place and confirm my credit."

"Shall you be able to pay M. Cavalcanti the five hundred thousand livres you promise for my dowry?"

"He shall receive them on returning from the mayor's office."

"Well!"

"What next? what more do you want?"

"I wish to know if, in demanding my signature, you leave me entirely free in my person?"

"Absolutely!"

"Then, *well*; as I said, monsieur, I am ready to marry M. Cavalcanti."

"But what are your projects?"

"Ah, that is my secret. What advantage should I have over you, if knowing your secret, I were to tell you mine?"

Danglars bit his lips. "Then," said he, "you are ready to pay the official visits, which are absolutely indispensable?"

"Yes," replied Eugénie.

"And to sign the contract in three days?"

"Yes."

"Then, in my turn, I will say, Well!" Danglars pressed his daughter's hand in his. But it was extraordinary,—neither did the father say, "Thank you, my child," nor did the daughter smile at her father.

"Is the conference ended?" asked Eugénie, rising.

Danglars intimated that he had nothing more to say. Five minutes afterwards the piano resounded to the touch of Mademoiselle d'Armilly's fingers, and Mademoiselle Danglars was singing Brabantio's malediction on Desdemona. At the end of the piece Etienne entered, and announced to Eugénie that the horses were in the carriage, and the baroness was waiting for her to pay her visits. We have seen them at Villefort's; from there they proceeded then on their course.

CHAPTER XCVI

THE CONTRACT

THREE days after the scene we have just described,—namely, towards five o'clock in the afternoon of the day fixed for the signature of the contract between Mademoiselle Eugénie Danglars and Andrea Cavalcanti, whom the banker persisted in calling prince,—as a fresh breeze agitated all the leaves in the little garden situated in front of the Count of Monte Cristo's house, and the latter was preparing to go out, while his horses were impatiently pawing the ground, held in by the coachman, who had been seated a quarter of an hour on his box, the elegant phaeton with which we are familiar rapidly turned the angle of the entrance-gate, and threw, rather than set down on the steps of the door, M. Andrea Cavalcanti, as much decked and as gay as if he, on his side, were going to marry a princess. He inquired after the count with his usual familiarity, and bounding lightly to the first story, met him on the top of the stairs. The count stopped on seeing the young man. As for Andrea, he was launched, and when once launched, nothing stopped him. "Ah! good-morning, my dear count," said he.

"Ah, M. Andrea!" said the latter, with his half-jesting tone, "how do you do?"

"Charmingly, as you see. I am come to talk to you about a thousand things; but first, were you going out or just returned?"

"I was going out, monsieur."

"Then, in order not to hinder you I will get up with you, if you please, in your carriage, and Tom shall follow with my phaeton in tow."

"No," said the count, with an imperceptible smile of contempt, for he had no wish to be seen in the young man's society, —"no, I prefer listening to you here, my dear M. Andrea; we can chat better indoors, and there is no coachman to overhear our conversation."

The count returned to a small drawing-room on the first floor, sat down, and crossing his legs, motioned to the young man to take a seat also. Andrea assumed his gayest manner. "You know, my dear count," said he, "that the ceremony is to take place this evening. At nine o'clock the contract is to be signed at my father-in-law's."

"Ah! indeed?" said Monte Cristo.

"What! is it news to you? Has not M. Danglars apprised you of the solemnity?"

"Oh, yes," said the count; "I received a letter from him yesterday, but I do not think that the hour was mentioned."

"Possibly; my father-in-law trusted to its general notoriety."

"Well," said Monte Cristo, "you are fortunate, M. Cavalcanti; it is a most suitable alliance you are contracting, and besides, Mademoiselle Danglars is fine-looking."

"Yes, indeed she is," replied Cavalcanti, with a very modest tone.

"Above all, she is very rich,—at least, I believe so," said Monte Cristo.

"Very rich, do you think?" replied the young man.

"Doubtless; it is said M. Danglars conceals at least half of his fortune."

"And he acknowledges fifteen or twenty millions," said Andrea, his eyes sparkling with joy.

"Without reckoning," added Monte Cristo, "that he is on the eve of entering into a sort of speculation already in vogue in the United States and in England, but quite novel in France."

"Yes, yes, I know what you allude to; the railway, of which he has obtained the grant, is it not?"

"Precisely; it is generally believed he will gain ten millions by that affair."

"Ten millions? Do you think so? It is magnificent!" said Cavalcanti, who was quite confounded at the metallic sound of these golden words.

"Without reckoning," continued Monte Cristo, "that all his fortune will come to you, and justly too, since Mademoiselle

Danglars is an only daughter. Besides, your own fortune, as your father assured me, is almost equal to that of your betrothed. But enough of money matters. Do you know, M. Andrea, I think you have managed this affair rather skilfully?"

"Not badly, by any means," said the young man; "I was born for a diplomatist."

"Well, you must become a diplomatist; diplomacy, you know, is not acquired,—it is a matter of instinct. Your heart, then, is captivated?"

"Indeed, I fear it," replied Andrea, in the tone in which he had heard Dorante or Valère reply to Alceste in the Théâtre Français.

"Is your love returned?"

"I suppose so," said Andrea, with a triumphant smile, "since I am accepted. But I must not forget one grand point."

"What is that?"

"That I have been singularly assisted."

"Nonsense!"

"I have, indeed."

"By circumstances?"

"No; by you."

"By me? Not at all, prince," said Monte Cristo, laying a marked stress on the title; "what have I done for you? Are not your name, your social position, and your merit sufficient?"

"No," said Andrea,—"no; it is useless for you to say so, count. I maintain that the position of a man like you has done more than my name, my social position, and my merit."

"You are completely mistaken, monsieur," said Monte Cristo, coldly, who perceived the perfidious manœuvre of the young man, and understood the bearing of his words; "you acquired my protection only after the influence and fortune of your father had been ascertained. For after all, who procured for me, who had never seen either you or your illustrious father, the pleasure of your acquaintance? Two of my good friends, Lord Wilmore and the Abbé Busoni. What induced me, not to become your surety, but to patronise you? It was your father's name, so well known in Italy and so highly honoured. Personally, I do not know you." This calm tone and perfect ease made Andrea comprehend that he was for the moment restrained by a more muscular hand than his own, and that the restraint could not be easily broken through.

"Oh! then my father has really a very large fortune, count?"

"It appears so, monsieur," replied Monte Cristo.

"Do you know if my promised dowry is come?"

"I have been advised of it."

"But the three millions?"

"The three millions are probably on the road."

"Then I shall really have them?"

"Forsooth!" said the count, "I do not think you have yet known the want of money."

Andrea was so surprised that he could not help reflecting for a moment. Then, arousing from his reverie, he said, "Now, monsieur, I have one request to make to you, which you will understand, even if it should be disagreeable to you."

"Proceed," said Monte Cristo.

"I have formed an acquaintance, thanks to my good fortune, with many noted persons, and have, at least for the moment, a crowd of friends. But marrying as I am about to do, before all Paris, I ought to be supported by an illustrious name; and in the absence of the paternal hand, some powerful one ought to lead me to the altar. Now, my father is not coming to Paris, is he?"

"He is old, covered with wounds, and suffers, he says, to the point of death every time he makes a journey."

"I understand. Well, I have come to ask a favour of you."

"Of me?"

"Yes, of you."

"And pray what may it be?"

"Well, to take his place."

"Ah, my dear monsieur! What! after the numerous relations I have had the happiness to sustain towards you, you know me so little as to ask such a thing? Ask me to lend you half a million; and although such a loan is somewhat rare, on my honour, you would annoy me less. Know, then, what I thought I had already told you, that as regards participation in the affairs of the world,—moral, especially,—the Count of Monte Cristo has never ceased to entertain the scruples and even the superstitions of the East. I, who have a seraglio at Cairo, one at Smyrna, and one at Constantinople, preside at a wedding?—never!"

"Then you refuse me?"

"Decidedly; and were you my son or my brother I would refuse you in the same way."

"But what must be done?" said Andrea, disappointed.

"You have a hundred friends, you have yourself just said."

"Agreed; but you introduced me at M. Danglars's."

"Not at all! let us recall the exact facts. You met him at

a dinner-party at my house, and you introduced yourself at his house; that is a totally different affair."

"Yes, but by my marriage; you have forwarded that."

"I! not in the least, I beg you to believe. Recollect what I told you when you asked me to propose you. Oh, I never make matches, my dear prince, it is my settled principle."

Andrea bit his lips. "But at least," he said, "you will be there?"

"Will all Paris be there?"

"Oh, certainly."

"Well, like all Paris, I shall be there too," said the count.

"And will you sign the contract?"

"I see no objection to that; my scruples do not go so far as that."

"Well, since you will grant me no more, I must be content with what you give me. But one word more, count."

"What is it?"

"Advice."

"Be careful; advice is worse than a service."

"Oh, you can give me this without compromising yourself."

"Tell me what it is."

"Is my wife's fortune five hundred thousand livres?"

"That is the sum M. Danglars himself declared to me."

"Must I receive it, or leave it in the hands of the notary?"

"This is the way such affairs are generally arranged when conducted in proper form: Your two solicitors appoint a meeting, when the contract is signed, for the next day or the following; then they exchange the two portions, for which they each give a receipt; then, when the marriage is celebrated, they place the amount at your disposal as principal in the partnership."

"Because," said Andrea, with a certain ill-concealed uneasiness, "I thought I heard my father-in-law say he intended embarking our property in that famous railway affair of which you spoke just now."

"Well," replied Monte Cristo, "it will be the way, everybody says, of trebling your fortune in twelve months. The Baron Danglars is a good father, and knows how to calculate."

"Come, then," said Andrea, "all is well, excepting your refusal, which grieves me."

"You must attribute it only to natural scruples under the circumstances."

"Well," said Andrea, "let it be as you wish; this evening, then, at nine o'clock."

"Adieu till then."

Notwithstanding a slight resistance on the part of Monte Cristo, whose lips turned pale, but who preserved his ceremonious smile, Andrea seized the count's hand, pressed it, jumped into his phaeton, and disappeared.

The four or five remaining hours before nine o'clock arrived, Andrea employed in riding, paying visits designed to engage those friends of whom he had spoken to appear at the banker's in their gayest equipages, dazzling them by promises of those stock transactions which since then have turned every brain, and which Danglars was just then introducing. In fact, at half-past eight in the evening, the grand salon, the gallery adjoining, and the three other drawing-rooms on the same floor were filled with a perfumed crowd, who had been attracted very little by sympathy, and very much by the irresistible desire of being present where anything new was taking place. An academician would say that *soirées* of the world are collections of flowers which attract inconstant butterflies, famished bees, and buzzing drones.

The rooms were of course splendidly illuminated. The light streamed forth on the gold mouldings and the silk hangings; and all that badly chosen furniture, which had only its richness to boast of, shone in its splendour. Mademoiselle Eugénie was dressed with elegant simplicity, in a figured white silk dress. A white rose, half concealed in her jet-black hair, was her only ornament, unaccompanied by a single jewel. Her eyes, however, betrayed an assurance which contradicted the girlish simplicity of this modest attire. Madame Danglars was chatting at a short distance from her with Debray, Beauchamp, and Château-Renaud. Debray was admitted to the house for this grand solemnity, but like every one else, and without any particular privilege. M. Danglars, surrounded by deputies and men connected with the revenue, was explaining a new theory of taxation which he intended to adopt when the course of events should compel government to call him into the ministry. Andrea, on whose arm hung one of the most consummate dandies of the opera, was explaining to him, somewhat improperly, and because he was obliged to be bold to appear at ease, his future projects, and the new luxuries he meant to introduce to Parisian fashions with his hundred and seventy-five thousand livres per annum. The crowd moved to and fro in those rooms like an ebb and flow of turquoises, rubies, emeralds, opals, and diamonds. As usual, the oldest women were the most decorated, and the ugliest the most conspicuous. If there was a beautiful lily, or a sweet rose,

you had to search for it, concealed in some corner behind a mother with a turban, or an aunt with a bird of paradise.

At each moment, in the midst of the crowd, the buzzing, and the laughter, the doorkeeper's voice was heard announcing some name well known in the financial world, respected in the army, or illustrious in literature; then a slight movement in the different groups responded to the name. But for one whose privilege it was to agitate that ocean of human waves, how many were received with a look of indifference or a sneer of disdain! At the moment when the hand of the massive timepiece, representing Endymion asleep, pointed to nine on its golden face, and the hammer, the faithful servant of the mechanical idea, struck nine times, the name of the Count of Monte Cristo resounded in its turn, and as if struck by an electric shock, all the assembly turned towards the door. The count was dressed in black, and with his habitual simplicity; his white waistcoat displayed his expansive noble chest, his black stock appeared singularly fresh, contrasting as it did with the deadly paleness of his face. His only jewel was a chain, so fine that the slender gold thread was scarcely perceptible on his white waistcoat. A circle was formed immediately round the door. The count perceived at one glance Madame Danglars at one end of the drawing-room, M. Danglars at the other, and Eugénie in front of him. He first advanced towards the baroness, who was chatting with Madame de Villefort, who had come alone, Valentine being still an invalid; and without turning aside, so clear was the road left for him, he passed from the baroness to Eugénie, whom he complimented in terms so rapid and reserved that the proud artist was astonished by them. Near her was Mademoiselle Louise d'Armilly, who thanked the count for the letters of introduction he had so kindly given her for Italy, which she intended immediately to make use of. On leaving these ladies, he found himself with Danglars, who had advanced to meet him.

Having accomplished these three social duties, Monte Cristo stopped, looking around him with that expression peculiar to a certain class, which seems to say, "I have done my duty, now let others do theirs." Andrea, who was in an adjoining room, had shared in the sensation caused by the arrival of Monte Cristo, and now came forward to pay his respects to the count. He found him completely surrounded; all were eager to speak to him, as is always the case with those whose words are few and weighty. The solicitors arrived at this moment, and arranged their scrawled papers on the velvet cloth embroidered with gold

which covered the table prepared for the signature; it was a gilt table supported on lions' claws. One of the notaries sat down, the other remained standing. They were about to proceed to the reading of the contract, which half Paris, assembled at that solemnity, was to sign. All took their places, or rather the ladies formed a circle, while the gentlemen (more indifferent as to the place of the *style énergique*, as Boileau says) commented on the feverish agitation of Andrea, on M. Danglars's riveted attention, Eugénie's composure, and the light and sprightly manner in which the baroness treated this important affair.

The contract was read during a profound silence. But as soon as it was finished the buzz was redoubled through all the drawing-rooms; the brilliant sums, the rolling millions which were to be at the command of the betrothed, and which crowned the display—which had been made in a room entirely appropriated for that purpose—of the wedding presents and the young lady's diamonds, had sounded with all their potency on the ears of the jealous assembly. Mademoiselle Danglars's charms were heightened in the opinion of the young men, and for the moment seemed to outvie the sun in splendour. As for the ladies, it is needless to say that while jealous of these millions they thought they did not require them to render them beautiful. Andrea, surrounded by his friends, complimented, flattered, beginning to believe in the reality of his dream, was almost bewildered. The notary solemnly took the pen, flourished it above his head, and said, "Gentlemen, the contract is ready to sign."

The baron was to sign first; then the representative of M. Cavalcanti, senior; then the baroness; afterwards the future couple, as they are called in the abominable style which prevails on stamped paper. The baron took the pen and signed, then the representative. The baroness approached, leaning on Madame de Villefort's arm. "My dear," said she, as she took the pen, "is it not vexatious? An unexpected incident, in the affair of murder and theft at the Count of Monte Cristo's, in which he nearly fell a victim, deprives us of M. de Villefort's presence."

"Indeed!" said M. Danglars, in the same tone in which he would have said, "Faith, I care very little about it!"

"Ah!" said Monte Cristo, approaching, "I am much afraid I am the involuntary cause of that absence."

"What! you, count?" said Madame Danglars, signing; "if you are, take care, I shall never forgive you."

Andrea pricked up his ears.

"But it is not my fault; as I shall endeavour to prove."

Every one listened eagerly; Monte Cristo, who so rarely opened his lips, was about to speak.

"You remember," said the count, during the most profound silence, "that the unhappy wretch who came to rob me, died at my house; it was supposed he was stabbed by his accomplice, on attempting to leave it."

"Yes," said Danglars.

"Well, in order to examine his wounds, he was undressed, and his clothes were thrown into a corner, where the officers of justice picked them up, with the exception of the waistcoat, which they overlooked."

Andrea turned pale, and drew towards the door; he saw a cloud rising in the horizon, which appeared to forebode a coming storm.

"Well! this waistcoat was discovered to-day, covered with blood, and with a hole over the heart." The ladies screamed, and two or three prepared to faint. "It was brought to me. No one could guess what the dirty rag could be; I alone supposed it was the waistcoat of the victim. My valet, in examining this mournful relic, felt a paper in the pocket and drew it out; it was a letter addressed to you, baron."

"To me!" cried Danglars.

"Yes, indeed, to you; I succeeded in deciphering your name under the blood with which the letter was stained," replied Monte Cristo, amid the general burst of amazement.

"But," asked Madame Danglars, looking at her husband with uneasiness, "how could that prevent M. de Villefort—"

"It is very simple, madame," replied Monte Cristo; "the waistcoat and the letter were both what is termed convictive evidence. I therefore sent it all to M. le Procureur du roi. You understand, my dear baron, legal proceedings are the safest in criminal cases; it was perhaps some plot against you."

Andrea looked steadily at Monte Cristo, and disappeared in the second drawing-room.

"Possibly," said Danglars; "was not this murdered man an old galley-slave?"

"Yes," replied the count; "a felon named Caderousse."

Danglars turned slightly pale; Andrea left the second drawing-room and went into the ante-chamber.

"But go on signing," said Monte Cristo; "I perceive that my story has caused a general emotion, and I beg to apologise to you, baroness, and to Mademoiselle Danglars."

The baroness, who had signed, returned the pen to the

notary. "Prince Cavalcanti!" said the latter; "Prince Cavalcanti, where are you?"

"Andrea! Andrea!" repeated several young people, who were already on sufficiently intimate terms with him to call him by his Christian name.

"Call the prince! inform him that it is his turn to sign!" cried Danglars to one of the doorkeepers.

But at the same time the crowd of guests rushed, terrified, into the principal salon, as if some frightful monster had entered the apartments with the intention to devour some one. There was indeed reason to retreat, to be alarmed, and to scream. An officer was placing two soldiers at the door of each drawing-room, and was advancing towards Danglars, preceded by a commissioner of police, girded with his scarf. Madame Danglars uttered a scream and fainted. Danglars, who thought himself threatened (certain consciences are never calm),—Danglars exhibited to his guests a terrified countenance.

"What is the matter, monsieur?" asked Monte Cristo, advancing to meet the commissioner.

"Which of you, gentlemen," asked the magistrate, without replying to the count, "answers to the name of Andrea Cavalcanti?"

A cry of stupor was heard from all parts of the room. They searched; they questioned.

"But who then is Andrea Cavalcanti?" asked Danglars, in amazement.

"A galley-slave, escaped from the galleys at Toulon."

"And what crime has he committed?"

"He is accused," said the commissary, with his inflexible voice, "of having assassinated the man named Caderousse, his former companion in chains, at the moment when he was making his escape from the house of the Count of Monte Cristo."

Monte Cristo cast a rapid glance around him. Andrea had disappeared.

CHAPTER XCVII

THE DEPARTURE FOR BELGIUM

A FEW minutes after the scene of confusion produced in the salons of M. Danglars by the unexpected appearance of the brigade of soldiers, and by the disclosure which had followed, the large hotel was deserted with a rapidity which the announcement of a case of plague or of cholera morbus among the guests

would have caused. In a few minutes, through all the doors, down all the staircases, by every issue, each one had hastened to retire, or rather to fly; for it was one of those circumstances in which it is useless to attempt to impart those commonplace consolations which in great misfortune make the best friends so annoying. There remained in the banker's hotel only Danglars, closeted in his cabinet, and making his statement to the officer of the detachment; Madame Danglars, terrified, in the boudoir with which we are acquainted; and Eugénie, who, with haughty air and disdainful lip, had retired to her room with her inseparable companion, Mademoiselle Louise d'Armilly. As for the numerous servants (more numerous that evening than usual, for their number was augmented by the cooks and butlers of the Café de Paris), venting on their employers their anger at what they termed the insult, they collected in groups in the hall, in the kitchens, or in their rooms, thinking very little of their service, which was thus naturally interrupted. Among all these persons, agitated by diverse interests, two only deserve our notice; these are Mademoiselle Eugénie Danglars and Mademoiselle Louise d'Armilly.

The betrothed had retired, as we said, with haughty air, disdainful lip, and the demeanour of an outraged queen, followed by her companion, paler and more disturbed than herself. On reaching her room Eugénie locked her door, while Louise fell on a chair.

"Ah, what a horrible thing!" said the young musician; "who would have suspected it? M. Andrea Cavalcanti a murderer—a galley-slave escaped—a convict!"

An ironical smile curled the lip of Eugénie. "In truth, I was fated," said she; "I escaped the Morcerf only to fall into the Cavalcanti."

"Oh, do not confound the two, Eugénie."

"Hold your tongue! The men are all infamous; and I am happy to be able now to do more than detest them,—I despise them."

"What shall we do?" asked Louise.

"What shall we do?"

"Yes."

"Why, the same we intended doing three days ago,—set off."

"What! although you are not now going to be married, you intend still—"

"Listen, Louise! I hate this life of the fashionable world, always ordered, measured, ruled, like our music-paper. What I have always wished for, desired, and coveted is the life of an

artist, free and independent, in which one relies only on himself, and is accountable only to himself. Remain here! what for? That they may try, a month hence, to marry me again; and to whom? To M. Debray, perhaps, as it was once proposed. No, Louise, no! This evening's adventure will serve for my excuse; I did not seek one, I did not ask for one. God sends me this, and it is well-timed!"

"How strong and courageous you are!" said the fair frail girl to her brunette companion.

"Did you not yet know me? Come, Louise, let us talk of our affairs. The post-chaise—"

"Was bought fortunately three days since."

"Have you had it sent where we are to go for it?"

"Yes."

"Our passport?"

"Here it is!"

And Eugénie, with her usual coolness, opened a printed paper, and read,—

"M. Léon d'Armilly, twenty years of age; profession, artist; hair black, eyes black; travelling with his sister."

"Capital! How did you get this passport?"

"When I went to ask M. de Monte Cristo for letters for the directors of the theatres at Rome and at Naples, I expressed my fears of travelling as a woman. He perfectly understood them, and undertook to procure for me a man's passport; and two days after I received this, to which I have added with my own hand, 'travelling with his sister.'"

"Well," said Eugénie, cheerfully, "we have then only to pack up our trunks; we shall start on the evening of the signature, instead of the evening of the wedding,—that is all."

"Reflect well, Eugénie!"

"Oh, I have finished all my reflections! I am tired of hearing only of reports, of the end of the month, of up and down of Spanish funds, of Haytian paper. Instead of that, Louise,—do you understand?—air, liberty, melody of birds, plains of Lombardy, Venetian canals, Roman palaces, the Bay of Naples. How much have we, Louise?"

The young girl to whom this question was addressed drew from an inlaid secretary a small portfolio with a lock, in which she counted twenty-three bank-notes.

"Twenty-three thousand livres," said she.

"And as much at least in pearls, diamonds, and jewels," said Eugénie. "We are rich. With forty-five thousand livres we

have enough to live on as princesses during two years, and comfortably during four; but before six months—you with your music, and I with my voice—we shall double our capital. Come, you shall take charge of the money, I of the jewel-box; so that if one of us had the misfortune to lose her treasure, the other would still have hers left. Now, the valise! let us make haste; the valise!"

"Stop!" said Louise, going to listen at Madame Danglars's door.

"What do you fear?"

"That we may be discovered."

"The door is locked."

"They may tell us to open it."

"They may if they like, but we will not."

"You are a perfect Amazon, Eugénie!" And the two young girls began to heap into a valise all the things they thought they should require.

"There now," said Eugénie, "while I change my costume do you lock the valise."

Louise pressed with all the strength of her little hands on the top of the valise. "But I cannot," said she; "I am not strong enough; do you shut it."

"Ah, you are right!" said Eugénie, laughing. "I forgot that I am Hercules, and you only the pale Omphale!" And the young girl, kneeling on the top, pressed the two parts of the valise together, and Mademoiselle d'Armilly passed the bolt of the padlock through.

When this was done, Eugénie opened a drawer, of which she kept the key, and took from it a wadded violet silk travelling-cloak. "Here," said she, "you will see that I have thought of everything; with this cloak you will not be cold."

"But you?"

Oh, I am never cold, you know! Besides, with these men's clothes—"

"Will you dress here?"

"Certainly."

"Shall you have time?"

"Do not be uneasy, you little coward! All our servants are busy, discussing the grand affair. Besides, what is there astonishing, when you think of the grief I ought to be in, that I shut myself up? tell me!"

"No, that is true; you reassure me."

"Come, help me."

From the same drawer from which she had taken the cloak

which she had given to Mademoiselle d'Armilly, and with which the latter had already covered her shoulders, she took a man's costume, complete from the boots to the coat, and a provision of linen, in which there was nothing superfluous, but everything necessary. Then, with a promptitude which indicated that this was not the first time she had amused herself by adopting the garb of the opposite sex, Eugénie drew on the boots and pantaloons, tied her cravat, buttoned her waistcoat up to the throat, and put on a coat which admirably fitted her beautiful figure.

"Oh, that is very good! indeed, it is very good!" said Louise, looking at her with admiration; "but that beautiful black hair, those magnificent braids which made all the ladies sigh with envy, will they go under a man's hat like the one I see there?"

"You shall see," said Eugénie. And seizing with her left hand the thick mass, which her long fingers could scarcely grasp, she took with her right hand a pair of long scissors, and soon the steel met through the rich and splendid hair, which fell entire at the feet of the young girl, who leaned back to keep it from her coat. Then she passed to the front hair, which she also cut off, without expressing the least regret; on the contrary, her eyes shone more sparkling and more lively than usual under her eyebrows black as ebony.

"Oh, the magnificent hair!" said Mademoiselle d'Armilly, with regret.

"And am I not a hundred times better thus?" cried Eugénie, smoothing the scattered curls of her hair, which had now quite a masculine appearance; "and do you not think me handsomer so?"

"Oh, you are beautiful—always beautiful!" cried Louise. "Now where are we going?"

"To Brussels, if you like; it is the nearest frontier. We can go to Brussels, Liége, Aix-la-Chapelle; then up the Rhine to Strasburg. We will cross Switzerland, and go down into Italy by the St. Gothard. Will that do?"

"Yes."

"What are you looking at?"

"I am looking at you; indeed, you are adorable like that! One would say you were carrying me off."

"Eh, *pardieu!* they would be right."

"Oh! I think you swore, Eugénie." And the two young girls, whom every one might have thought plunged in grief, the one on her own account, the other from interest in her friend, burst out laughing, as they cleared away every visible trace

of the disorder which had naturally accompanied the preparations for their escape. Then, having blown out their lights, with an inquiring eye, listening ear, and extended neck, the two fugitives opened the door of a dressing-room which led by a side staircase down to the yard, Eugénie going first, and holding with one arm the valise, which by the opposite handle Mademoiselle d'Armilly scarcely supported with both hands. The yard was empty; the clock was striking twelve. The porter had not yet gone to bed. Eugénie approached softly and saw the old man sleeping soundly in an armchair in his lodge. She returned to Louise, took up the valise, which she had placed for a moment on the ground, and they reached the archway under the shadow of the wall.

Eugénie concealed Louise in an angle of the gateway, so that if the porter chanced to awake he might see but one person. Then placing herself in the full light of the lamp which lit the yard, "Gate!" cried she, with her finest contralto voice, and rapping at the window.

The porter got up, as Eugénie expected, and even advanced some steps to recognise the person who was going out, but seeing a young man striking his boot impatiently with his riding-whip, he opened it immediately. Louise slid through the half-open gate like a snake, and bounded lightly forward. Eugénie, apparently calm, although in all probability her heart beat somewhat faster than usual, went out in her turn. A porter was passing, and they gave him the valise; then the two young girls, having told him to take it to No. 36, Rue de la Victoire, walked behind the man, whose presence comforted Louise. As for Eugénie, she was strong as a Judith or a Delilah. They arrived at the appointed spot. Eugénie ordered the porter to put down the valise, gave him some pieces of money, and having rapped at the shutter, sent him away. The shutter on which Eugénie had rapped was that of a little laundress, who had been previously apprised and had not yet gone to bed. She opened the door.

"Mademosielle," said Eugénie, "let the porter get the post-chaise from the coach-house and send for post-horses from the hotel. Here are five livres for his trouble."

"Indeed," said Louise, "I admire you, and I could almost say respect you." The laundress looked on in astonishment, but as she had been promised twenty louis, she made no remark.

In a quarter of an hour the porter returned with a post-boy and horses, which were harnessed and put in the post-chaise in

a minute, while the porter fastened the valise with a cord and strap.

"Here is the passport," said the postilion; "which way are we going, young gentleman?"

"To Fontainebleau," replied Eugénie, with an almost masculine voice.

"What do you say?" said Louise.

"I am giving the slip," said Eugénie; "this woman to whom we have given twenty louis may betray us for forty. We will soon alter our direction." And the young girl jumped into the britzska, which was admirably arranged for sleeping in, almost without touching the step.

"You are always right," said the teacher of music, seating herself by the side of her friend.

A quarter of an hour afterwards, the postilion, having been put in the right road, passed, cracking his whip, through the gateway of the Barrière St. Martin.

"Ah!" said Louise, "here we are out of Paris."

"Yes, my dear, and the escape is good and well effected," replied Eugénie.

"Yes, and without violence," said Louise.

"I shall bring that forward as an extenuating circumstance," replied Eugénie. These words were lost in the noise which the carriage made in rolling over the pavement of La Villette. M. Danglars had lost his daughter.

CHAPTER XCVIII

THE HOTEL OF THE BELL AND BOTTLE

AND now let us leave Mademoiselle Danglars and her friend pursuing their way to Brussels, and return to poor Andrea Cavalcanti, so uncomfortably interrupted in his career of fortune. Notwithstanding his youth, M. Andrea was a very skilful and intelligent young man. We have seen that on the first rumour which reached the salon, he had gradually approached the door, and crossing two or three rooms, had at last disappeared. But we have forgotten to mention one circumstance, which nevertheless ought not to be omitted; namely, that in one of the rooms he crossed, the *trousseau* of the bride-elect was exposed to view,—consisting of cases of diamonds, cashmere shawls, Valenciennes lace, English veils, and in fact all those tempting things the bare mention of which makes the hearts of

young girls bound with joy, and which is called the *corbeille*. Now, in passing through this room, Andrea proved himself not only to be clever and intelligent, but also provident, for he helped himself to the most valuable of the ornaments before him. Furnished with this plunder, Andrea leaped with a lighter heart from the window, intending to slip through the hands of the gendarmes. Tall and well-proportioned as an ancient gladiator, and muscular as a Spartan, he walked for a quarter of an hour without knowing where to direct his steps, actuated by the sole idea of removing himself from the spot where he knew he must be taken. Having passed through the Rue Mont Blanc, he found himself, with the instinct which thieves have in avoiding barriers, at the end of the Rue Lafayette. There he stopped, breathless and panting. He was quite alone. On one side was the vast wilderness of the St. Lazare, on the other, Paris in all its darkness. "Am I lost?" he cried; "no, not if I can use more activity than my enemies. My safety is now a mere question of speed." At this moment he perceived a cab at the top of the Faubourg Poisonnière. The dull driver, smoking his pipe, appeared to be seeking to regain the end of the Faubourg St. Denis, where, no doubt, he ordinarily stood.

"Ho, friend!" said Benedetto.

"What do you want, monsieur?" asked the driver.

"Is your horse tired?"

"Tired? oh, yes, tired enough! He has done nothing the whole of this blessed day! Four wretched fares, and twenty sous over, making in all seven livres, are all that I have earned, and I have to pay ten to the owner."

"Will you add these twenty livres to the seven you have?"

"With pleasure, monsieur; twenty livres are not to be despised. Tell me what I am to do for this."

"A very easy thing if your horse be not tired."

"I tell you he will go like the wind, only tell me which way to drive."

"Towards the Louvres."

"Ah, I know it! the land of ratafia."

"Exactly so; I merely wish to overtake one of my friends, with whom I am going to hunt to-morrow at Chapelle en Serval. He should have waited for me here with a cabriolet till half-past eleven. It is twelve; and tired of waiting, he must have gone on."

"It is likely."

"Well, will you try and overtake him?"

"Nothing I should like better."

"If you do not overtake him before we reach Bourget you shall have twenty livres; if not before Louvres, thirty."

"And if we do overtake him?"

"Forty," said Andrea, after a moment's hesitation, at the end of which he remembered that he might safely promise.

"That will do!" said the man; "get in and we're off."

Andrea got into the cab, which passed rapidly through the Faubourg St. Denis, along the Faubourg St. Martin, crossed the barrier, and threaded its way through the interminable Villette. They never overtook the chimerical friend, yet Andrea frequently inquired of walking passers and at the inns which were not yet closed, for a green cabriolet and bay horse; and as there are a great many cabriolets to be seen on the road to the Pays Bas, and nine-tenths of them are green, information rained on him at every step. Every one had just seen it pass; it was only five hundred, two hundred, one hundred steps in advance; at length they reached it, but it was not the friend. Once the cab was also passed by a *calèche* rapidly whirled along by two post-horses. "Ah!" said Cavalcanti to himself, "if I only had that britzska, those two good post-horses, and, above all, the passport that carries them on!" And he sighed deeply. The *calèche* contained Mademoiselle Danglars and Mademoiselle d'Armilly. "Onward, onward!" said Andrea, "we must overtake him soon." And the poor horse resumed the desperate gallop it had never slackened since leaving the barrier, and arrived smoking at Louvres.

"Certainly," said Andrea, "I shall not overtake my friend, but I shall kill your horse, therefore I had better stop. Here are thirty livres; I will sleep at the Cheval Rouge, and will secure a place in the first coach. Good-night, friend."

And Andrea, after placing six pieces of five livres each in the man's hand, leaped lightly on to the pathway. The coachman joyfully pocketed the sum, and turned back on his road to Paris. Andrea pretended to go towards the Hôtel du Cheval Rouge; but after stopping an instant against the door, and hearing the last sound of the cab, which was disappearing to view, he went on his road, and with a firm tread made a journey of two leagues. There he rested; he must be near Chapelle en Serval, where he pretended to be going. It was not fatigue that stayed Andrea here; it was that he might form some resolution, adopt some plan. It would be impossible to make use of a diligence, equally so to engage post-horses; to travel either way a passport was necessary. It would also be impossible to remain in the department of the Oise, one of the most open and strictly

guarded in France; this was quite impossible, especially to a man like Andrea, an expert in criminal matters. He sat down by the side of the moat, buried his face in his hands, and reflected. Ten minutes after, he raised his head; his resolution was made. He threw some dust over the overcoat which he had found time to unhook from the ante-chamber and button over his ball costume, and going to Chapelle en Serval, he knocked loudly at the door of the only inn in the place. The host opened it. "My friend," said Andrea, "I was coming from Montefontaine to Senlis, when my horse, which is a troublesome creature, stumbled and threw me. I must reach Compiègne to-night or I shall cause deep anxiety to my family. Could you let me hire a horse of you?"

An innkeeper has always a horse to let, whether it be good or bad. The host of La Chapelle en Serval called the stable-boy, and ordered him to saddle Le Blanc; then he awoke his son; a child of seven years, whom he ordered to ride before the gentleman and bring back the horse. Andrea gave the innkeeper twenty livres, and in taking them from his pocket dropped a visiting-card. This belonged to one of his friends at the Café de Paris, so that the innkeeper, picking it up after Andrea had left, was convinced that he had let his horse to M. le Comte de Mauléon, 25 Rue St. Dominique, these being the name and address on the card. Le Blanc was not a fast animal, but it went equally and steadily; in three hours and a half Andrea had run over the nine leagues to Compiègne, and four o'clock struck as he reached the place where the diligences stop. There is an excellent hotel at Compiègne, well remembered by those who have once been to it. Andrea, who had often stayed there in his rides about Paris, recollected the Hotel of the Bell and Bottle. He turned round, saw the sign by the light of a reflected lamp; and having dismissed the child, giving him all the small coin he had about him, he began knocking at the door, reflecting with justice that having now three or four hours before him he had best fortify himself against the fatigues of the morrow by a sound sleep and a good supper. A waiter opened the door.

"My friend," said Andrea, "I have been dining at St. Jean au Bois, and expected to catch the coach which passes by at midnight; but like a fool I have lost my way, and have been walking for the last four hours in the forest. Show me into one of those pretty little rooms which overlook the court, and bring me a cold fowl and a bottle of Bordeaux."

The waiter had no suspicion; Andrea spoke with perfect composure; he had a cigar in his mouth, and his hands in the

pockets of his overcoat; his clothes were elegant, his chin smooth, his boots irreproachable. He looked merely as if he had stayed out very late, that was all. While the waiter was preparing his room, the hostess rose; Andrea assumed his most charming smile, and asked if he could have No. 3, which he had occupied on his last stay at Compiègne. Unfortunately, No. 3 was engaged by a young man who was travelling with his sister. Andrea appeared in despair, but consoled himself when the hostess assured him that No. 7, prepared for him, was situated precisely the same as No. 3, and while warming his feet and chatting about the last races at Chantilly, he waited until they announced his room to be ready.

Andrea had not spoken without cause of the pretty rooms looking out upon the court of the Bell Hotel, which, with its triple stages of galleries, looking like a theatre, with the jessamine and clematis twining round the light columns, forms one of the prettiest entrances to an inn you can imagine. The fowl was fresh, the wine old, the fire clear and sparkling, and Andrea was surprised to find himself eating with as good an appetite as though nothing had happened. Then he went to bed and almost immediately fell into that deep sleep which is sure to visit men of twenty years of age, even when they are torn with remorse. Now, we are obliged to own that Andrea ought to have felt remorse, but that he did not. This was the plan which had appeared to him to afford the best chance of safety: Before daybreak he would awake, leave the hotel after rigorously discharging his bill, and reaching the forest, he would, under pretence of making studies in painting, test the hospitality of some peasant, procure himself the dress of a woodcutter, and a hatchet, casting off the lion's skin to assume that of the woodman; then, with his hands covered with dirt, his hair darkened by means of a leaden comb, his complexion embrowned with a preparation for which one of his old comrades had given him the receipt, he intended, through different forests, to reach the nearest frontier, walking by night and sleeping in the day in the forests and quarries, and only entering inhabited districts to buy a loaf from time to time. Once past the frontier, Andrea proposed making money of his diamonds; and by uniting the proceeds to ten bank-notes he always carried about with him in case of accident, he would then find himself possessor of about fifty thousand livres, which he philosophically considered as no very deplorable condition after all. Moreover, he reckoned much on its being to the interest of Danglars to hush up the rumour of their misadventure. These were the reasons which,

added to the fatigue, caused Andrea to sleep so soundly. In order that he might wake early, he did not close the shutters, but contented himself with bolting the door and placing on the table an unclasped and long-pointed knife, whose temper he well knew, and which was never absent from him. At about seven in the morning Andrea was awakened by a ray of sunlight, which, warm and brilliant, played upon his face. In all well-organised brains the predominating idea—and there always is one—is sure to be the last thought before sleeping and the first upon waking in the morning. Andrea had scarcely opened his eyes when his predominating idea presented itself, and whispered in his ear that he had slept too long. He jumped out of bed and ran to the window. A gendarme was crossing the court. A gendarme is one of the most striking objects in the world, even to a man void of uneasiness; but for one who has a timid conscience, and with good cause too, the yellow, blue, and white uniform is really very alarming.

"Why is that gendarme there?" asked Andrea of himself. Then all at once he replied with that logic which the reader has doubtless remarked in him, "There is nothing astonishing in seeing a gendarme at an inn; instead of being astonished, let me dress myself!", And the youth dressed himself with a rapidity of which his *valet de chambre* had failed to divest him during the few months of fashionable life he had led in Paris. "Good!" said Andrea, while dressing himself. "I'll wait till he leaves, and then I'll slip away." And saying this, Andrea, who had now put on his boots and cravat, stole gently to the window, and a second time lifted up the muslin curtain. Not only was the first gendarme still there, but the young man now perceived a second yellow, blue, and white uniform at the foot of the staircase,—the only one by which he could descend,—while a third, on horseback, holding a musket in his fist, was posted as a sentinel at the great street door which alone afforded the means of egress. This appearance of the third gendarme was particularly decisive, for a crowd of curious loungers was extended before him, effectually blocking the entrance to the hotel. "They seek me!" was the first thought of Andrea. "*Diable!*" A pallor overspread the young man's forehead, and he looked around him with anxiety. His room, like all those on the same floor, had but one outlet to the gallery, in the sight of everybody. "I am lost!" was his second thought; and indeed for a man in Andrea's situation, an arrest comprehended the assizes, the trial, and death,—death without mercy or delay. For a moment he convulsively pressed his head within his hands,

and during that brief period he became nearly mad with terror; but soon a ray of hope glanced through the crowd of thoughts which bewildered his mind, and a faint smile played upon his white lips and pallid cheeks. He looked round and saw the objects of his search upon the chimney-piece; they were a pen, ink, and paper. With forced composure he dipped the pen in the ink, and wrote the following lines upon a sheet of paper:—

"I have no money to pay my bill, but I am not a dishonest man; I leave behind me as a pledge this pin, worth ten times the amount. I shall be excused for escaping at daybreak, for I was ashamed."

He then drew the pin from his cravat and placed it on the paper. This done, instead of leaving the door fastened he drew back the bolts, and even placed the door ajar, as though he had left the room forgetting to close it; and gliding into the chimney like a man accustomed to gymnastic exercises of that kind, having effaced the very marks of his feet upon the floor, he began climbing the hollow tunnel, which afforded him the only remaining chance of escape. At this precise time, the first gendarme Andrea had noticed walked upstairs, preceded by the commissioner of police, and supported by the second gendarme, who guarded the staircase, and was himself reinforced by the one stationed at the door.

Andrea was indebted for this visit to the following circumstances: At daybreak the telegraphs were set at work in all directions; and almost immediately the authorities in every district were aroused and were exerting their utmost endeavours to arrest the murderer of Caderousse. Compiègne, a royal residence and fortified town, is well furnished with authorities, gendarmes, and commissioners of police; they therefore began operations as soon as the telegraphic despatch arrived, and the Bell and Bottle being the first hotel in the town, they had naturally directed their first inquiries there. And besides, after the report of the sentinels guarding the Hôtel de Ville, which is next door to the Bell and Bottle, it was well understood that a number of travellers had arrived at the hotel during the night. The sentinel who was relieved at six o'clock in the morning even remembered that just as he was taking his post a few minutes past four, a young man arrived on horseback, with a little boy before him. The young man, having dismissed the boy and horse, knocked at the door of the hotel, which was opened and again closed after his entrance. Upon that young man, so strangely belated, suspicion centred.

Now, that young man was no other than Andrea. And therefore the commissary and the gendarme, who was a brigadier

directed their steps towards Andrea's room. They found the door ajar. "Oh, oh!" said the brigadier, an old fox, experienced in criminal strategy; "a bad sign, to find the door open! I would rather find it triply bolted." And indeed the little note and pin upon the table confirmed, or rather supported, the sad truth. Andrea had fled. We say supported, because the brigadier was too experienced to yield to a single proof. He glanced round, looked in the bed, shook the curtains, opened the closets, and finally stopped at the chimney. Andrea had taken the precaution to leave no traces of his feet in the ashes, but still it was an outlet, and under the circumstances every outlet was a subject for serious investigation. The brigadier sent for some sticks and straw, and having filled the chimney with them, set a light to it. The fire crackled, and the smoke ascended like the dull vapour from a volcano; but still no prisoner fell down, as they expected. The fact was that Andrea, at war with society ever since his youth, was quite as deep as a gendarme, even though he were advanced to the rank of brigadier; therefore, anticipating the fire, he had reached the roof, and was crouching down against the chimney-pot. At one time he thought he was saved, for he heard the brigadier exclaim in a loud voice to the two gendarmes, "He is not here!" But venturing to peep, he perceived that the gendarmes, instead of retiring, as might have been reasonably expected upon this announcement, were watching with increased attention. It was now his turn to look about him. The Hôtel de Ville, a massive building of the sixteenth century, was on his right. Any one could descend from the openings in the tower, and examine every corner of the roof below; and Andrea expected momentarily to see the head of a gendarme appear at one of these openings. If once discovered, he knew he would be lost, for a chase on the roof afforded no chance of success; he therefore resolved to descend, not through the same chimney by which he arrived, but by a similar one conducting to another room. He looked round for a chimney from which no smoke issued, and having reached it, he disappeared through the opening without being seen by any one. At the same instant, one of the little windows of the Hôtel de Ville was thrown open, and the head of the brigadier appeared. For an instant it remained motionless as one of the stone decorations of the building, then, after a long sigh of disappointment, the head disappeared. The brigadier, calm and dignified as the law he represented, passed through the crowd without answering the thousand questions addressed to him, and re-entered the hotel.

"Well?" asked the two gendarmes.

"Well, my boys," said the brigadier, "the brigand must really have escaped early this morning; but we will send to the roads of Villers Coterets and Noyon, and search the forest, when we shall catch him, no doubt."

The honourable functionary had scarcely expressed himself thus, with that intonation which is peculiar to brigadiers of the gendarmerie, when a loud scream, accompanied by the violent ringing of a bell, resounded through the court of the hotel.

"Ah, what is that?" cried the brigadier.

"Some traveller seems impatient," said the host. "In what number is the ringing?"

"No. 3."

"Run, waiter!"

At this moment the screams and ringing were redoubled.

"Ah, ha!" said the brigadier, stopping the servant, "the person who is ringing appears to want something more than a waiter; we will attend upon him with a gendarme. Who occupies No. 3?"

"The little fellow who arrived last night in a post-chaise with his sister, and who asked for a double-bedded room." The bell here rang for a third time.

"Follow me, Monsieur the Commissioner!" said the brigadier; "tread in my steps."

"Wait a moment," said the host; "No. 3 has two staircases, an interior and an exterior."

"Good!" said the brigadier. "I will take charge of the interior. Are the carbines loaded?"

"Yes, brigadier."

"Well, you guard the exterior, and if he attempt to fly, fire upon him; he must be a great criminal, from what the telegraph says."

The brigadier, followed by the commissary, disappeared by the interior staircase, accompanied by the noise which his assertions respecting Andrea had excited in the crowd.

This is what had happened: Andrea had very cleverly managed to descend two-thirds of the chimney, but then his foot slipped, and notwithstanding his holding on with his hands, he came into the room with more speed and noise than he intended. It would have signified little had the room been empty, but unfortunately it was occupied. Two women, sleeping in one bed, were awakened by the noise, and fixing their eyes upon the spot whence the sound proceeded, they saw a man. One of these ladies, the fair one, uttered those terrible shrieks which resounded

through the house; while the other, rushing to the bell-rope, rang with all her strength. Andrea, as we can see, was surrounded by misfortune.

"For pity's sake," he cried, pale and bewildered, without seeing whom he was addressing,—"for pity's sake do not call assistance! Save me! I will not harm you."

"Andrea! the assassin!" cried one of the women.

"Eugénie! Mademoiselle Danglars!" exclaimed Andrea, stupefied.

"Help! help!" cried Mademoiselle d'Armilly, taking the bell from her companion's hand, and ringing it yet more violently.

"Save me, I am pursued!" said Andrea, clasping his hands. "For pity, for mercy's sake do not deliver me up!"

"It is too late; they are coming," said Eugénie.

"Well, conceal me somewhere; you can say you were needlessly alarmed. You will divert their suspicions and save my life!"

The two ladies, pressing closely to one another, and drawing the bed-clothes tightly round them, remained silent to this supplicating voice; all kinds of apprehension and repugnance agitated their minds.

"Well! be it so," at length said Eugénie; "return by the same road you came, and we will say nothing about you, unhappy wretch."

"Here he is! here he is!" cried a voice on the landing; "here he is! I see him!"

The brigadier had put his eye to the key-hole, and had perceived Andrea standing and entreating. A violent blow from the butt-end of the musket burst open the lock, two more forced out the bolts, and the broken door fell in. Andrea ran to the other door, leading to the gallery, and opened it to rush out. The two gendarmes were there with their carbines, which they levelled at him. Andrea stopped short, and stood with his body a little thrown back, pale, and with the useless knife in his clinched hand.

"Fly, then!" cried Mademoiselle d'Armilly, whose pity returned as her fears diminished; "fly!"

"Or kill yourself!" said Eugénie, in a tone which a Vestal in the circus would have used, while ordering the victorious gladiator to finish his vanquished adversary.

Andrea shuddered, and looked on the young girl with a smile of contempt which showed that his corrupt mind could not understand that sublime ferocity of honour. "Kill myself!" he cried, throwing down his knife; "why should I do so?"

"Why, you said," answered Mademoiselle Danglars, "that you would be condemned to die like the worst criminals."

"Bah!" said Cavalcanti, crossing his arms, "one has friends!"

The brigadier advanced to him, sword in hand.

"Come, come," said Andrea, "sheathe your sword, my fine fellow; there is no occasion to make such a fuss, since I yield myself;" and he held out his hands to be manacled. The two girls looked with horror upon this hideous metamorphosis,—the man of the world shaking off his covering and appearing the galley-slave. Andrea turned towards them, and with an impertinent smile asked, "Have you any message for your father, Mademoiselle Danglars, for in all probability I shall return to Paris?"

Eugénie covered her face with her hands. "Oh, ho!" said Andrea, "there is nothing to be ashamed of; and I think no worse of you, even though you did post after me. Was I not nearly your husband?"

And with this raillery Andrea went out, leaving the two girls a prey to their own sufferings of shame, and to the commentaries of the crowd. An hour after, they stepped into their *calèche*, both dressed in female attire. The gate of the hotel had been closed to screen them from sight; but they were forced, when the door was open, to pass through two rows of curious spectators with gleaming eyes and murmuring lips. Eugénie closed the blinds; but though she could not see, she could hear, and the sneers of the crowd reached her in the carriage. "Oh! why is not the world a wilderness?" she exclaimed, throwing herself into the arms of Mademoiselle d'Armilly, her eyes sparkling with the same kind of rage which made Nero wish that the Roman world had but one neck, that he might sever it at a single blow. The next day they stopped at the Hôtel de Flandre, at Brussels. The same evening Andrea was secured in the Conciergerie.

CHAPTER C

THE LAW

We have seen how quietly Mademoiselle Danglars and Mademoiselle d'Armilly accomplished their transformation and flight; the fact being that every one was too much occupied in his or her own affairs to think of theirs. We will leave the banker to put in order, with perspiring brow, and facing the phantom of

bankruptcy, the enormous columns representing his liabilities, and will follow the baroness, who, after remaining for a moment as if crushed under the weight of the blow which had struck her, had gone to seek her usual adviser, Lucien Debray. The baroness had looked forward to this marriage as a means of ridding her of a guardianship which, over a girl of Eugénie's character, could not fail to be rather troublesome; for in those tacit understandings which maintain the bond of family union, the mother is really the mistress of her daughter only upon the condition of continually presenting herself to her as a model of wisdom and type of perfection. Now, Madame Danglars feared the penetration of Eugénie and the influence of Mademoiselle d'Armilly. She had frequently observed the contemptuous expression with which her daughter looked upon Debray,—an expression which seemed to imply that she understood all the mystery of her mother's amorous and pecuniary relationships with the intimate secretary; whereas, an interpretation more sagacious and profound would have shown the baroness, on the contrary, that Eugénie detested Debray, not at all because he was a cause of dissension and scandal in the paternal mansion, but simply because she classed him in that category of bipeds to whom Diogenes refused longer to give the name of men, and whom Plato described by a periphrasis as animals with two feet and without feathers.

Unfortunately, in this world every one views things through a certain medium, which prevents his seeing them in the same light as others; and Madame Danglars, from her point of view, very much regretted that the marriage of Eugénie had not taken place, not only because the match was good and likely to insure the happiness of her child, but because it would also set her at liberty. She hastened, therefore, to the residence of Debray. Debray, after having, like the rest of Paris, witnessed the contract scene and the scandal attending it, had retired in haste to his club, where he was chatting with some friends upon the events, which served as a subject of conversation for three-fourths of that gossiping city known as the capital of the world. At the precise time when Madame Danglars, dressed in black and concealed in a long veil, was ascending the stairs leading to the apartments of Debray, notwithstanding the assurances of the young man that his master was not at home, Debray was occupied in repelling the insinuations of a friend, who tried to persuade him that after the terrible scene which had just taken place he ought, as a friend of the family, to marry Mademoiselle Danglars and her two millions. Debray defended himself like

a man who asks nothing better than to be convinced, for that idea had often presented itself to his own mind; then, recalling Eugénie's proud and lofty character, he reassumed from time to time an attitude entirely defensive, saying that that marriage was in every way impossible, but yet allowing himself to play secretly with the wicked thought which, all moralists say, constantly preoccupies even the man who is most honourable and pure-minded, hiding at the bottom of his soul, like Satan hiding behind the cross. Tea, play, and the conversation, which had become interesting during the discussion of such serious affairs, lasted till one o'clock in the morning.

Meanwhile, Madame Danglars, veiled and agitated, awaited the return of Debray in the little green room, seated between two baskets of flowers, which she had that morning sent, and which, it must be confessed, Debray had himself arranged and watered with so much care that his absence was half excused in the eyes of the poor woman. At forty minutes past eleven, tired of waiting, she returned home. Women of a certain grade are like grisettes in one respect,—they seldom come home later than twelve o'clock. The baroness returned to the hotel with as much caution as Eugénie had used in leaving it; she ran lightly upstairs, and with an aching heart entered her apartment, adjoining, as we know, that of Eugénie. So much did she dread to excite remark, so firmly did she believe—poor woman, respectable on that point at least—in her daughter's innocence and loyalty to the paternal home! She listened at Eugénie's door; then, hearing no sound, she tried to enter, but the bolts were shot home. Madame Danglars concluded that, fatigued with the terrible excitement of the evening, she had retired to her bed and was asleep. She called the maid and questioned her.

"Mademoiselle Eugénie," the maid replied, "retired to her apartment with Mademoiselle d'Armilly; they then took tea together, after which they desired me to leave, saying they required me no longer."

Since then the maid had been below, and like every one else she thought the young ladies were in their own room. Madame Danglars therefore went to bed without a shadow of suspicion; but at rest in regard to individuals, her mind dwelt on the event. In proportion as her ideas became clearer, the occurrences at the scene of the contract increased in importance. It was no longer a scandal; it was an uproar. It was no longer a disgrace; it was ignominy. And then the baroness remembered that she had felt no pity for poor Mercédès, who had been afflicted with as severe a blow through her husband and son.

"Eugénie," she said to herself, "is lost, and so are we. The affair, as it will be reported, will cover us with shame, for in society such as ours ridicule inflicts painful and incurable wounds. How fortunate that God has given to Eugénie that strange character which has so often made me tremble!" And her glance was turned towards heaven, where mysterious Providence disposes all things, and out of a fault, nay, even a vice, sometimes produces a blessing. And then her thoughts, cleaving through space like a bird in the air, rested on Cavalcanti. "That Andrea was a wretch, a robber, an assassin; and yet his manners indicated a sort of education, if not a complete one; he was presented to the world with the appearance of an immense fortune, supported by honourable names."

How could she extricate herself from this labyrinth? To whom would she apply to help her out of this painful situation? Debray, to whom she had hastened, with the first instinct of a woman towards the man she loves, and who yet betrays her,—Debray could give her only advice; she must apply to some one more powerful than he. The baroness then thought of M. de Villefort. It was M. de Villefort who had caused Cavalcanti to be arrested. It was M. de Villefort who had remorselessly brought misfortune into her family, as though they had been strangers. But, no; on reflection, the *procureur du roi* was not a merciless man. It was the magistrate, slave to his duties, the friend, and loyal friend, who roughly but firmly cut into the very core of the corruption; he was not the executioner, but the surgeon, who wished to withdraw the honour of Danglars from the ignominious association with that abandoned young man whom they had presented to the world as their son-in-law. Since Villefort, the friend of Danglars, acted thus, no one could suppose that the banker had been previously acquainted with, or had lent himself to, any of the intrigues of Andrea. The conduct of Villefort, therefore, upon reflection appeared to the baroness as if designed for their mutual advantage. But the inflexibility of the *procureur du roi* should stop there; she would see him the next day, and if she could not make him fail in his duties as a magistrate, she would at least obtain all the indulgence he could allow. She would invoke the past, recall old recollections; she would supplicate him by the remembrance of guilty, yet happy days. M. de Villefort would stifle the affair; or at least he would give his vigilance some other direction, and allow Cavalcanti to escape, afterwards pursuing the crime under that shadow of guilt called

contempt of court. And having reached this conclusion, she comfortably went to sleep.

At nine o'clock next morning she rose, and without ringing for her maid, or giving any sign of her existence, she dressed herself in the same simple style as on the previous night; then running downstairs, she left the hotel, walked to the Rue de Provence, called a *fiacre,* and drove to M. de Villefort's house. For the last month this accursed house had presented the gloomy appearance of a lazaretto infected with the plague. Some of the apartments were closed within and without; the shutters were opened only for a moment to admit the air. Then might be seen at the window the scared face of a lackey, and immediately afterwards the window would be closed, as a sepulchre is closed by a tombstone; and the neighbours would say to each other in a low voice, "Shall we to-day see another bier leave the house of M. le Procureur du roi?"

Madame Danglars involuntarily shuddered at the aspect of the desolate house; descending from the *fiacre,* she approached the door with trembling knees, and rang the bell. Three times did the bell ring with a dull, heavy sound, seeming to participate in the general sadness, before the *concierge* appeared and peeped through the door, which he opened just wide enough to allow his words to be heard. He saw a lady, a fashionable, elegantly-dressed lady, and yet the door remained almost closed.

"Do you intend opening the door?" said the baroness.

"First, madame, who are you?"

"Who am I? You know me well enough."

"We no longer know any one, madame."

"You must be mad, my friend," said the baroness.

"Where do you come from?"

"Oh! this is too much!"

"Madame, these are my orders; excuse me,—your name?"

"The Baronne Danglars; you have seen me twenty times."

"Possibly, madame. And now, what do you want?"

"Oh, how extraordinary! I shall complain to M. de Villefort of the impertinence of his servants."

"Madame, this is precaution, not impertinence; no one enters here without an order from M. d'Avrigny, or without having business with M. le Procureur du roi."

"Well! my business is with M. le Procureur du roi."

"Is it pressing business?"

"You can imagine so, since I have not yet gone back to my carriage. But enough of this; here is my card. Take it to your master."

"Madame will await my return?"

"Yes; go."

The *concierge* closed the door, leaving Madame Danglars in the street. She had not long to wait; directly afterwards the door was opened wide enough to admit her, and when she had passed through, it was again shut. Without losing sight of her for an instant, the *concierge* took a whistle from his pocket as soon as they entered the court, and sounded it. The *valet de chambre* appeared on the doorsteps.

"You will excuse this poor fellow, madame," he said, as he preceded the baroness; "but his orders are precise, and M. de Villefort begged me to tell you he could not act otherwise."

In the court was a tradesman showing his merchandise, who had been admitted with the same precautions. The baroness ascended the steps; she felt herself strongly infected with the sadness which, as it were, enlarged the circle of her own; and still guided by the *valet de chambre*, who did not lose sight of her for an instant, she was introduced to the magistrate's cabinet. Preoccupied as Madame Danglars had been with the object of her visit, the treatment she had received from these underlings appeared to her so insulting that she began by complaining of it. But Villefort, raising his head, which had been bowed down by grief, looked up at her with so sad a smile that her complaints died upon her lips. "Forgive my servants," he said, "for a terror I cannot blâme them for; being suspected, they have become suspicious."

Madame Danglars had often heard of the terror to which the magistrate alluded, but without the evidence of her own eyesight she could never have believed the sentiment had been carried so far. "You too, then, are unhappy?" she said.

"Yes, madame," replied the magistrate.

"Then you pity me?"

"Sincerely, madame."

"And you understand what brings me here?"

"You wish to speak to me of what has happened to you, do you not?"

"Yes, monsieur, a frightful calamity!"

"That is to say, a misfortune."

"A misfortune!" cried the baroness.

"Alas! madame," said the *procureur du roi*, with his imperturbable calmness of manner, "I consider those alone calamities which are irreparable."

"And do you suppose this will be forgotten?"

"Everything will be forgotten, madame," said Villefort,

"Your daughter will be married to-morrow, if not to-day,—in a week, if not to-morrow; and I do not think you can regret the intended husband of your daughter."

Madame Danglars gazed on Villefort, stupefied to find him so almost insultingly calm. "Have I come to a friend?" she asked in a tone full of mournful dignity.

"You know that you have, madame," said Villefort, whose pale cheeks became slightly flushed as he gave her the assurance. And indeed this assurance carried him back to different events from those now occupying the baroness and himself.

"Well, then, be more affectionate, my dear Villefort," said the baroness. "Speak to me, not as a magistrate, but as a friend; and when I am in bitter anguish of spirit, do not tell me I ought to be gay."

Villefort bowed. "When I hear any one speak of calamities," he said, "I have within the last few months contracted the bad habit of thinking of my own, and then I cannot help drawing up an egotistical parallel in my mind. This is the reason that by the side of my calamities yours appear to me mere misfortunes; this is why my wretched situation makes yours appear enviable. But this annoys you; let us change the subject. You were saying, madame—"

"I came to ask you, my friend," said the baroness, "what will be done with this impostor?"

"Impostor!" repeated Villefort; "certainly, madame, you appear to extenuate some cases, and exaggerate others. Impostor! M. Andrea Cavalcanti, or rather M. Benedetto, is nothing more or less than an assassin!"

"Monsieur, I do not deny the justice of your correction; but the more severely you arm yourself against that unfortunate, the more deeply will you strike our family. Come, forget him for a moment, and instead of pursuing him, let him escape."

"You are too late, madame; the orders are issued."

"Well, should he be arrested—do you think they will arrest him?"

"I hope so."

"If they should arrest him (I know that sometimes prisons afford means of escape), will you leave him in prison?"

The *procureur du roi* shook his head.

"At least keep him there till my daughter is married."

"Impossible, madame; justice has its formalities."

"What! even for me?" said the baroness, half-jesting, half in earnest.

"For all, even for myself among the rest," replied Villefort.

"Ah!" exclaimed the baroness, without expressing the ideas which the exclamation betrayed.

Villefort looked at her with that piercing glance with which he fathomed hidden thoughts. "Yes, I know what you mean," he said; "you allude to those terrible rumours spread abroad in the world, that all those deaths which have kept me in mourning for the last three months, and from which Valentine has escaped only by a miracle, have not occurred naturally."

"I was not thinking of that," replied Madame Danglars, quickly.

"Yes, you were thinking of it, and with justice. You could not help thinking of it, and saying in your heart, 'You, who pursue crime so vindictively, answer now, why are there unpunished crimes in your dwelling?'" The baroness became pale. "You were saying this, were you not?"

"Well, I own it."

"I will answer you." Villefort drew his armchair nearer to Madame Danglars; then, resting both hands upon his desk, he said in a voice more hollow than usual, "There are crimes which remain unpunished because the criminals are unknown, and we might strike the innocent instead of the guilty; but when the culprits are discovered [Villefort here extended his hand towards a crucifix placed opposite to his desk]—when they are discovered, by the living God, madame, whoever they may be, they shall die! Now, after the oath I have just taken, and which I will keep, madame, dare you ask for mercy for that wretch?"

"But, monsieur, are you sure he is as guilty as they say?"

"Listen; this is his description: 'Benedetto, condemned at the age of sixteen, for five years to the galleys for forgery.' He promised well, as you see,—first a runaway, then an assassin."

"And who is this wretch?"

"Who can tell? A vagabond, a Corsican."

"Has no one owned him?"

"No one; his parents are unknown."

"But who was the man who brought him from Lucca?"

"Another rascal like himself, perhaps his accomplice."

The baroness clasped her hands. "Villefort!" she exclaimed in her softest and most captivating manner.

"For Heaven's sake, madame," said Villefort, with a firmness of expression not altogether free from harshness,—"for Heaven's sake, do not ask pardon of me for a criminal! What am I? The law. Has the law eyes to witness your grief? Has the law ears to hear your sweet voice? Has the law a memory for all those soft recollections you endeavour to recall? No,

madame; the law has commanded, and when it commands it strikes. You will tell me that I am a living being, and not a code,—a man, and not a volume. Look at me, madame; look around me. Have mankind treated me as a brother? Have they loved me? Have they spared me? Has any one shown the mercy towards me that you now ask at my hands? No, madame, they struck me, always struck me! Woman! siren that you are, do you persist in fixing on me that fascinating eye, which reminds me that I ought to blush? Well, be it so; let me blush for the faults you know, and perhaps—perhaps for even more than those! But having sinned myself, it may be more deeply than others, I never rest till I have torn the disguises from my fellow-creatures, and found out their weaknesses. I have always discovered them; I will say more,—I have discovered with joy, with triumph, those proofs of human weakness or perversity. For every criminal I condemn seems to me a living proof that I am not a hideous exception. Alas, alas, alas! all the world is wicked; let us therefore strike at wickedness!" Villefort pronounced these last words with a feverish rage, which gave a ferocious eloquence to his words.

"But," said Madame Danglars, resolving to make a last effort, "this young man, though a murderer, is an orphan, abandoned by everybody."

"So much the worse, or rather, so much the better; Providence has thus provided that no one will weep on his account."

"But this is trampling on the weak, monsieur."

"The weak who assassinate!"

"His disgrace reflects upon my house."

"Is not death in mine?"

"Oh, monsieur," exclaimed the baroness, "you are without pity for others! Well, then, I tell you that no one will have pity for you!"

"Be it so!" said Villefort, raising his arms to heaven.

"At least, delay the trial till the next assizes; that will give us six months in which to be forgotten."

"No, madame," said Villefort; "the accusation is prepared. There are yet five days left; five days are more than I require. Do you not think that I also long for forgetfulness? While working night and day, I sometimes lose all recollection of the past, and then I experience the same sort of happiness I can imagine the dead to feel; still, it is better than suffering."

"But monsieur, he has fled; let him escape,—inaction is a pardonable offence."

"I tell you it is too late; early this morning the telegraph was employed, and by this time—"

"Monsieur," said the *valet de chambre*, entering the room, "a dragoon has brought this despatch from the Minister of the Interior."

Villefort seized the letter, and hastily unsealed it. Madame Danglars trembled with fear; Villefort started with joy. "Arrested!" he exclaimed; "he was taken at Compiègne. It is done!"

Madame Danglars rose from her seat, pale and cold. "Adieu, monsieur!" she said.

"Adieu, madame!" replied the *procureur du roi*, as in an almost joyful manner he conducted her to the door. Then, turning to his desk, he said, striking the letter with his right hand, "Come, I had a forgery, three robberies, and two incendiaries; I only wanted a murder, and here it is. It will be a splendid session!"

CHAPTER CI

THE APPARITION

As the *procureur du roi* had told Madame Danglars, Valentine had not yet recovered. Prostrated by weakness, she was, indeed, confined to her bed; and it was in her own room, and from the lips of Madame de Villefort, that she heard all the strange events we have related,—the flight of Eugénie, and the arrest of Andrea Cavalcanti, or rather Benedetto, together with the accusation of murder brought against him. But Valentine was so weak that this recital scarcely produced the same effect that it would have done had she been in her usual state of health. Indeed, her brain was the seat of only vague ideas; and confused forms, mingled with strange fancies, alone presented themselves before her eyes. During the daytime Valentine's perceptions remained tolerably clear, owing to the constant presence of M. Noirtier, who caused himself to be carried to his granddaughter's room, and watched her with paternal tenderness. Villefort also, on his return from the Palais, frequently passed an hour or two with his father and child. At six o'clock Villefort retired to his study; at eight M. d'Avrigny arrived himself, bringing the night draught prepared for the young girl, and then M. Noirtier was carried away. A nurse of the doctor's choice succeeded them, and never left till about ten or eleven o'clock, when Valentine was asleep. As she went downstairs

she gave the keys of Valentine's room to M. de Villefort, so that no one could reach the sick-room except through Madame de Villefort's and little Edouard's chambers. Every morning Morrel called on Noirtier to receive news of Valentine, and, strange to say, each day found him less uneasy. In the first place, though Valentine still laboured under violent nervous excitement, she was better from day to day; and moreover, had not Monte Cristo told him, when, half distracted, he had rushed to his house, that if she was not dead in two hours she was saved? Now four days had elapsed, and Valentine still lived.

The nervous excitement which we have mentioned pursued Valentine even in her sleep, or rather in that state of somnolescence which succeeded her waking hours; it was, then, in the silence of night, in the dim light shed from the alabaster lamp on the chimney-piece, that she saw those shadows pass and repass which hover over the bed of sickness, and fan the fever with their trembling wings. First she fancied she saw her stepmother threatening her, then Morrel stretched his arms towards her; sometimes strangers, like the Count of Monte Cristo, appeared to visit her; even the very furniture, in these moments of delirium, seemed to move. This state lasted till about three o'clock in the morning, when a deep heavy slumber overcame the young girl, from which she did not awake till morning.

On the evening of the day on which Valentine had learned the flight of Eugénie and the arrest of Benedetto, Villefort having retired as well as Noirtier and D'Avrigny, her thoughts wandered in a confused maze, alternately reviewing her own situation and the events of which she had just heard. Eleven o'clock had struck. The nurse, having placed the beverage prepared by the doctor within reach of the patient and locked the door, was listening with terror to the comments of the servants in the kitchen, and storing her memory with the horrible stories which had for three months provided subjects of conversation in the ante-chambers in the house of the *procureur du roi*.

Meanwhile something unlooked for was taking place in the room which had been so carefully locked. Ten minutes had elapsed since the nurse had left; Valentine, who for the last hour had been suffering from the fever which returned nightly, incapable of controlling her ideas, was forced to yield to the excitement which spent itself in producing and reproducing a succession of the same fancies and images. The night-lamp

threw out countless rays, each resolving itself into some strange form to her disordered imagination, when suddenly by its flickering light Valentine thought she saw the door of her library, which was in the recess by the chimney-piece, open slowly, though she in vain listened for the sound of the hinges on which it turned. At any other time Valentine would have seized the silken bell-pull, and summoned assistance, but nothing astonished her in her present situation. Her reason told her that all the visions she beheld were but the offspring of her delirium; and the conviction was strengthened by the fact that in the morning no traces remained of the nocturnal phantoms, who disappeared with the daylight. From behind the door a human figure appeared; but she was too familiar with such apparitions to be alarmed, and therefore only stared, hoping to recognise Morrel. The figure advanced towards the bed, and then stopped and appeared to listen with profound attention. At this moment a ray of light glanced across the face of the midnight visitor.

"It is not he!" she murmured, and waited in the assurance of its being but a dream for the man to disappear or assume some other form. Still, she felt her pulse, and finding it throb violently, she remembered that the best method of dispelling such illusions was to drink; for a draught of the beverage designed to allay her fever seemed to cause a reaction of the brain, and for a short time she suffered less. Valentine therefore reached her hand towards the glass, but as soon as her trembling arm left the bed the apparition advanced more quickly towards her, and approached so closely that she fancied she heard his breath, and felt the pressure of his hand. This time the illusion, or rather the reality, surpassed anything Valentine had before experienced; she began to believe herself really alive and awake, and the consciousness that she was in full possession of her senses made her shudder. The pressure she felt was evidently intended to arrest her arm, and she slowly withdrew it. Then the figure, from whom she could not detach her eyes, and who appeared more protecting than menacing, took the glass, and walking towards the night-light, held it up, as if to test its transparency. This did not seem sufficient; the man, or rather the phantom,—for he trod so softly that no sound was heard,—then poured out about a spoonful into the glass, and drank it. Valentine witnessed this scene with profound stupefaction. Every minute she had expected that it would vanish and give place to another vision; but the man, instead of dissolving like a shadow, again ap-

proached her, and said in an agitated voice, "Now you may drink."

Valentine trembled. It was the first time that one of these visions had addressed her in a living voice, and she was about to utter an exclamation. The man placed his finger on her lips. "The Count of Monte Cristo!" she murmured.

It was easy to see that no doubt now remained in the young girl's mind as to the reality of the scene; her eyes started with terror, her hands trembled, and she rapidly drew the bedclothes closer to her. The presence of Monte Cristo at such an hour, his mysterious, extraordinary, and inexplicable entrance into her room through the wall, might well seem impossibilities to her disordered mind.

"Do not call any one; do not be alarmed," said the count; "do not let a shade of suspicion or uneasiness remain in your breast. The man standing before you, Valentine (for this time it is no illusion), is the tenderest father and the most respectful friend you could imagine in your dreams."

Valentine could not reply. The voice which indicated the real presence of him who spoke to her alarmed her so much that she feared to utter a syllable; still the expression of her eyes seemed to inquire, "If your intentions are pure, why are you here?"

The count's marvellous sagacity understood all that was passing in the young girl's mind. "Listen to me," he said, "or, rather, look upon me; look at my face, paler even than usual, and my eyes, red with weariness. For four nights I have not closed them; for four nights I have been constantly watching you, to protect and preserve you for Maximilian."

The blood mounted rapidly to the cheeks of Valentine, for the name just pronounced by the count dispelled all the fear with which his presence had inspired her. "Maximilian!" she exclaimed, and so sweet did the sound appear to her that she repeated it,—"Maximilian! has he then confided all to you?"

"Everything. He told me your life was his; and I have promised him that you shall live."

"You have promised him that I shall live?"

"Yes."

"But, monsieur, you spoke of vigilance and protection. Are you, then, a doctor?"

"Yes, the best that Heaven can send you at the present time, believe me."

"You say that you have watched?" said Valentine, uneasily. "Where have you been? I have not seen you."

The count extended his hand towards the library. "I was hidden behind that door," he said, "which leads into the next house, which I have rented."

Valentine turned her eyes away, and with an impulse of pride and modest fear, exclaimed, "Monsieur, I think you have been guilty of an unparalleled intrusion, and that which you call protection is very like an insult."

"Valentine," he answered, "during my long watch over you, all I have observed has been what people visited you, what nourishment was prepared, and what beverage was served; then, when the latter appeared to me to be dangerous, I entered, as I have now done, emptied your glass, and substituted in the place of the poison a wholesome draught, which, instead of producing the death intended, caused life to circulate in your veins."

"Poison! Death!" exclaimed Valentine, believing herself again under the influence of some feverish hallucination; "what are you saying, monsieur?"

"Hush, my child!" said Monte Cristo, again placing his finger upon her lips; "I did say 'poison' and 'death.' But drink some of this;" and the count took a bottle from his pocket, containing a red liquid, of which he poured a few drops into the glass. "Drink this, and then take nothing more to-night."

Valentine stretched out her hand; but scarcely had she touched the glass when she drew it back in fear. Monte Cristo took the glass and drank half its contents, and then presented it to Valentine, who smiled, and swallowed the rest. "Oh, yes!" she exclaimed, "I recognise the flavour of my nocturnal beverage which refreshed me so much, and seemed to ease my aching brain. Thank you, monsieur, thank you!"

"This is how you have lived during the last four nights, Valentine," said the count. "But I, how have I lived? Oh, the wretched hours I have endured! the tortures I have suffered when I saw the deadly poison poured into your glass, when I trembled lest you would drink it before I could find time to throw it away!"

"Monsieur," said Valentine, at the height of terror, "you say you endured tortures when you saw the deadly poison poured into my glass; but if you saw this, you must also have seen the person who poured it?"

"Yes."

Valentine raised herself in bed, and drew over her chest, which appeared whiter than snow, the embroidered cambric,

still moist with the cold dews of delirium, to which were now added those of terror. "You saw the person?" repeated the young girl.

"Yes!" repeated the count.

"That which you tell me is horrible, monsieur. You wish to make me believe something too dreadful. What! attempt to murder me in my father's house—in my room—on my bed of sickness? Oh, leave me, monsieur! you are tempting me; you blaspheme the divine goodness! It is impossible; it cannot be!"

"Are you the first that this hand has stricken? Have you not seen M. de Saint-Méran, Madame de Saint-Méran, Barrois, all fall? Would not M. Noirtier also have fallen a victim had not the treatment he has been pursuing for the last three years neutralised the effects of the poison?"

"Oh, Heaven!" said Valentine; "is this the reason why grandpapa has made me share all his beverages during the last month?"

"And have they all tasted of a slightly bitter flavour, like that of dried orange-peel?"

"Oh, Heaven, yes!"

"Then that explains all," said Monte Cristo. "He also knows that some one here is giving poison,—perhaps knows who it is. He has been fortifying you, his beloved child, against the poison, and owing to that beginning of the habit the poison has partially failed. This accounts for your being still alive—which before I could not understand—after being poisoned four days ago with a poison which generally kills at once."

"But who, then, is this assassin, this murderer?"

"Let me also ask you a question. Have you never seen any one enter your room at night?"

"Oh, yes! I have frequently seen shadows pass close to me, approach, and disappear, but I took them for visions raised by my feverish imagination; and indeed when you entered I thought I was under the influence of delirium, or that I was dreaming."

"Then you do not know who it is that attempts your life?"

"No," said Valentine; "who could desire my death?"

"You shall know it now, then," said Monte Cristo, listening.

"What do you mean?" said Valentine, looking around terrified.

"Because you are not feverish or delirious to-night, but thoroughly awake; midnight is striking, which is the hour murderers choose."

"Oh, heavens!" exclaimed Valentine, wiping off the drops which ran down her forehead.

Midnight struck slowly and sadly; every stroke of the bronze hammer seemed to beat upon the young girl's heart.

"Valentine," said the count, "summon up all your courage; still the beatings of your heart. Do not let a sound escape you, and feign to be asleep; then you will see."

Valentine seized the count's hand. "I think I hear a noise," she said; "leave me."

"Good-by, for the present," replied the count, walking upon tiptoe towards the library door, and smiling with an expression so sad and paternal that the young girl's heart was filled with gratitude. Before closing the door, he turned round once more and said, "Not a movement, not a word; let them think you asleep, or perhaps you may be killed before I have the power of helping you." And with this fearful injunction the count disappeared through the door, which noiselessly closed after him.

CHAPTER CII

THE SERPENT

VALENTINE was alone. Two other clocks, slower than that o St. Philippe du Roule, struck the hour of midnight at different distances; then, aside from the rumbling of a few carriages, all was silent. Valentine's attention was engrossed by the clock in her room, which marked the seconds. She began counting them, remarking that they were much slower than the beatings of her heart. And still she doubted; the inoffensive Valentine could not imagine that any one should desire her death. Why should any one? To what end? What had she done to excite the malice of an enemy? There was no fear of her falling asleep. One terrible idea pressed upon her mind,—that some one existed in the world who had attempted to assassinate her, and who was about to endeavour to do so again. Supposing this person, wearied at the inefficacy of the poison, should, as Monte Cristo had suggested, have recourse to steel! What if the count could not come to her in season! What if her last moments were approaching; if she should never again see Morrel! At that thought, which covered her at the same time with a livid paleness and a cold perspiration, Valentine was ready to seize the bell-cord and summon help. But through the door she fancied she saw the luminous eye of the count,—that eye which lived in

her memory, and the recollection of which overwhelmed her with so much shame that she asked herself whether any amount of gratitude could ever repay his self-sacrifice and devotion. Twenty minutes, twenty eternities, passed thus, then ten more, and at last the clock struck the half-hour. Just then the sound of finger-nails slightly grating against the door of the library informed Valentine that the count was still watching, and that he was warning her to do the same. In fact, on the opposite side, that is, towards Edouard's room, Valentine fancied she heard the creaking of the floor. She listened attentively, holding her breath till she was nearly suffocated; the lock turned, and the door slowly opened. Valentine had raised herself upon her elbow, and had scarcely time to throw herself down on the bed and shade her eyes with her arm; then, trembling, agitated, and her heart beating with indescribable terror, she waited.

Some one approached the bed and withdrew the curtains. Valentine summoned every effort, and breathed with that regular respiration which announces tranquil sleep. "Valentine!" said a low voice. The young girl shuddered even to the bottom of her heart, but made no answer. "Valentine!" repeated the same voice. Still silent; Valentine had promised not to wake. Then everything remained still, excepting that Valentine heard the almost noiseless sound of some liquid poured into the glass she had just emptied. Then she ventured to open her eyelids and glance over her extended arm. She saw a woman in a white dressing-gown pouring a liquor from a phial into her glass. During this short time Valentine must have held her breath, or moved in some slight degree, for the woman, disturbed, stopped and leaned over the bed in order the better to ascertain whether Valentine slept. It was Madame de Villefort!

On recognising her stepmother, Valentine could not repress a shudder, which caused a vibration in the bed. Madame de Villefort instantly stepped back close to the wall, and there, shaded by the bed-curtains, she silently and attentively watched the slightest movement of Valentine. The latter recollected the terrible caution of Monte Cristo; she fancied that the hand not holding the phial clasped a long sharp knife. Then collecting all her remaining strength, she forced herself to close her eyes; but this simple exercise of the most delicate organs of the frame, generally so easy to accomplish, became almost impossible at this moment, so much did curiosity struggle to open the eyes and learn the truth. Madame de Villefort, however, reassured by the silence, which was disturbed only by the regular breathing of Valentine, again extended her hand, and half-hidden by

the curtains, succeeded in emptying the contents of the phial into the glass. Then she retired so gently that Valentine did not know she had left the room. She only witnessed the withdrawal of the arm,—the fair round arm of a woman twenty-five years old, young and beautiful, who poured out death.

It is impossible to describe the sensations experienced by Valentine during the minute and a half that Madame de Villefort remained in the room. The grating against the library door roused the young girl from the state of stupor in which she was plunged, and which almost amounted to insensibility. She raised her head with an effort. The noiseless door again turned on its hinges, and the Count of Monte Cristo reappeared.

"Well," said he, "do you still doubt?"

"Oh, my God!" murmured the young girl.

"Have you seen?"

"Alas!"

"Did you recognise?"

Valentine groaned. "Oh, yes!" she said, "I saw, but I cannot believe!"

"Would you rather die, then, and cause Maximilian's death?"

"My God! my God!" repeated the young girl, almost distracted; "can I not leave the house; can I not escape?"

"Valentine, the hand which now threatens you will pursue you everywhere; your servants will be seduced with gold, and death will be offered to you disguised in every shape. You will find it in the water you drink from the spring, in the fruit you pluck from the tree."

"But did you not say that my kind grandfather's precaution had neutralised the poison?"

"Yes, but not against a strong dose; the poison will be changed, or the quantity increased." He took the glass and raised it to his lips. "It is already done," he said; "brucine is no longer employed, but a simple narcotic! I can recognise the flavour of the alcohol in which it has been dissolved. If you had taken what Madame de Villefort has poured into your glass, Valentine! Valentine! you would have been lost!"

"But," exclaimed the young girl, "why am I thus pursued?"

"Why? Are you so kind, so good, so unsuspicious of ill that you cannot understand, Valentine?"

"No, I have never injured her."

"But you are rich, Valentine; you have two hundred thousand livres a year, and you prevent her son from enjoying these two hundred thousand livres."

"How so? My fortune is not hers, but is inherited from my relatives."

"Certainly; and this is why Monsieur and Madame de Saint-Méran have died; this is why M. Noirtier was sentenced the day he made you his heir; this is why you in your turn are to die,—it is because your father would inherit your property, and your brother, his only son, would inherit from him."

"Edouard! Poor child! are all these crimes committed on his account?"

"Ah! then you at length understand?"

"Heaven grant that this may not be visited upon him!"

"Valentine, you are an angel!"

"But why is my grandfather allowed to live?"

"It was considered that you being dead the fortune would naturally revert to your brother unless he were disinherited; and so the crime appearing useless, it would be folly to commit it."

"And is it possible that this frightful combination of crimes has been invented by a woman?"

"Do you recollect seeing in the arbour of the Hôtel des Postes, at Perusa, a man in a brown cloak, whom your stepmother was questioning upon *aqua-tofana?* Well, ever since then the infernal project has been ripening in her brain."

"Ah, then, indeed, monsieur," said the sweet girl, bathed in tears, "I see that I am condemned to die!"

"No, Valentine, for I have foreseen all their plots; no, your enemy is conquered, since we know her; no, you will live, Valentine,—live to be happy yourself, and to confer happiness upon a noble heart; but to insure this you must rely on me."

"Command me, monsieur; what am I to do?"

"You must blindly take what I give you."

"Oh! God is my witness," cried Valentine, "that if I were alone I should prefer death to life."

"You must not confide in any one,—not even in your father."

"My father is not engaged in this fearful plot, is he, monsieur?" asked Valentine, clasping her hands.

"No; and yet your father, a man accustomed to judicial accusations, ought to have known that all these deaths have not happened naturally. It is he who should have watched over you; he should have occupied my place; he should have emptied that glass; he should have risen against the assassin. Spectre against spectre!" he murmured in a low voice as he concluded his sentence.

"Monsieur," said Valentine, "I will do all I can to live, for

there are two beings whose existence depends upon mine,—my grandfather and Maximilian."

"I will watch over them as I have over you."

"Well, monsieur, do as you will with me;" and then she added in a low voice, "Oh, heavens! what will happen to me?"

"Whatever may happen, Valentine, do not be alarmed. Though you suffer, though you lose sight, hearing, touch, fear nothing; though you should awake and be ignorant where you are, still do not fear,—even though you should find yourself in a sepulchral vault or coffin. Reassure yourself then, and reflect: 'At this moment a friend, a father, who lives for my happiness and that of Maximilian, watches over me!'"

"Alas! alas! what a fearful extremity!"

"Valentine, would you rather denounce your stepmother?"

"I would rather die a hundred times—oh, yes, die!"

"No, you will not die; but will you promise me, whatever happens, that you will not lament, but hope?"

"I will think of Maximilian!"

"You are my own dear child, Valentine! I alone can save you, and I will!"

Valentine, in the extremity of her terror, joined her hands, for she felt that the moment had arrived to ask for courage, and began to pray; and while uttering little more than incoherent words, she forgot that her white shoulders had no other covering than her long hair, and that her heart could be seen beating through the lace of her night-dress.

Monte Cristo gently laid his hand on the young girl's arm, drew the velvet coverlid close to her throat, and said with a paternal smile, "My child, believe in my devotion to you as you believe in the goodness of God and the love of Maximilian."

Then he drew from his waistcoat-pocket the little emerald box, raised the golden lid, and took from it a pastille of about the size of a pea, which he placed in her hand. Valentine took it, and looked attentively at the count. On the face of her intrepid protector was a reflection of the divine majesty and power. She evidently interrogated him by her look.

"Yes," said he.

Valentine carried the pastille to her mouth, and swallowed it.

"And now, my dear child, adieu for the present. I will try and gain a little sleep, for you are saved."

"Go," said Valentine; "whatever happens, I promise you not to fear."

Monte Cristo for some time kept his eyes fixed on the young girl, who gradually fell asleep, yielding to the effects of the

narcotic which he had given her. Then he took the glass, emptied three parts of the contents in the fireplace, that it might be supposed Valentine had taken it, and replaced it on the table; then he disappeared, after throwing a farewell glance on Valentine, who slept with the confidence and innocence of an angel lying at the feet of the Lord.

CHAPTER CIII

VALENTINE

The night-light continued to burn on the chimney-piece, exhausting the last drops of oil which floated on the surface of the water; the globe of the lamp appeared of a reddish hue, and the flame, brightening before it expired, threw out those last flickerings which in an inanimate object have been so often compared with the last convulsions in a human frame. A dull and dismal light was shed over the bed-clothes and the curtains surrounding the young girl. All noise in the streets had ceased, and the silence was frightful. Then the door of Edouard's room opened, and a face we have before noticed appeared in the glass opposite; it was that of Madame de Villefort, who came to witness the effects of the draught. She stopped in the doorway, listened for a moment to the flickering of the lamp, the only sound in that deserted room, and then advanced to the table, to see if Valentine's glass were empty. It was still about a quarter full, as we before stated. Madame de Villefort emptied the contents into the ashes, which she disturbed, that they might the more readily absorb the liquid; then she carefully rinsed the glass, and wiping it with her handkerchief, replaced it on the table.

If any one could have looked into the room just then, he would have noticed the hesitation with which Madame de Villefort approached the bed, and looked fixedly on Valentine. The dim light, the profound silence, and the gloomy thoughts inspired by the hour, and still more by her own conscience, all combined to produce a sensation of fear; the poisoner was afraid to contemplate her own work. At length she rallied, drew aside the curtain, and leaning over the pillow, gazed intently on Valentine. There was no sign of respiration; no breath issued through the half-closed teeth; the white lips no longer quivered; the eyes appeared floating in a bluish vapour, and the long black lashes rested on cheeks white as wax.

Madame de Villefort gazed upon the face so expressive even in its stillness; then she ventured to raise the coverlid and press her hand upon the young girl's heart. It was cold and motionless. She felt only the pulsation in her own fingers, and withdrew her hand with a shudder. One arm was hanging out of the bed,—that beautiful arm which from the shoulder to the wrist seemed moulded by a sculptor; but the forearm appeared slightly distorted by convulsion, and the hand, so delicately formed, was resting with stiff, outstretched fingers on the framework of the bed. The nails too were turning blue. Madame de Villefort had no longer any doubt,—all was over; she had consummated the last terrible work she had to accomplish.

There was no more to do in the room, so the poisoner retired stealthily, as though fearing to hear the sound of her own footsteps; but as she withdrew she still held aside the curtain, absorbed in the irresistible attraction always offered by the picture of death so long as it remains mysterious only, and is not yet offensive. Just then the lamp again flickered; the noise startled Madame de Villefort, who shuddered and dropped the curtain. Immediately afterwards the light expired, and the room was plunged in fearful darkness, while the clock at that minute struck half-past four. Overpowered with agitation, the poisoner succeeded in groping her way to the door, and reached her room in an agony of fear. The darkness lasted two hours longer; then by degrees a cold light crept through the Venetian blinds, until at length it revealed the objects in the room. About this time the nurse's cough was heard on the stairs and the woman entered the room with a cup in her hand. For a father or a lover, the first glance would have been decisive, —Valentine was dead; but to this hireling she appeared only to sleep. "Good!" she exclaimed, approaching the table, "she has taken part of her draught; the glass is two-thirds empty."

Then she went to the fireplace and lit the fire; and although she had but just left her bed, she could not resist the temptation offered by Valentine's sleep, and threw herself into an armchair to snatch a little more rest. The clock striking eight awoke her. Astonished at the prolonged sleep of the patient, and alarmed on seeing that the arm was still hanging out of bed, she advanced towards Valentine, and for the first time noticed the white lips. She tried to replace the arm, but it moved with a frightful stiffness which could not deceive a sick-nurse. She screamed aloud, then running to the door exclaimed, "Help! help!"

"What do you mean?" asked M. d'Avrigny, at the foot of the stairs, it being the time of his usual visit.

"What do you mean?" asked Villefort, rushing from his room. "Doctor, do you hear them call for help?"

"Yes, yes; let us hasten up! It was in Valentine's room."

But before the doctor and the father could reach the room, the servants who were on the same floor had entered, and seeing Valentine pale and motionless on her bed, they lifted up their hands towards heaven, and stood transfixed, as though struck by lightning.

"Call Madame de Villefort! wake Madame de Villefort!" cried the *procureur du roi* from the door of the chamber, which it seemed he scarcely dared to enter. But instead of obeying him, the servants stood watching M. d'Avrigny, who ran to Valentine, and raised her in his arms. "What! this one, too!" he murmured, letting her fall. "O my God! my God! when wilt thou grow weary?"

Villefort rushed into the room. "What are you saying, doctor?" he exclaimed, raising his hands to heaven.

"I say that Valentine is dead!" replied D'Avrigny, in a voice terrible in its solemn calmness.

M. de Villefort staggered and buried his head in the bed-clothes. On the exclamation of the doctor and the cry of the father, the servants all fled with muttered imprecations. They were heard running down the stairs and through the long passages; then there was a rush in the court, and then all was still. They had, one and all, deserted the accursed house. Just then Madame de Villefort, in the act of slipping on her dressing-gown, drew aside the tapestry, and for a moment remained on the threshold, as though interrogating the occupants of the room, while she endeavoured to call up some rebellious tears. On a sudden she stepped, or rather bounded, with out-stretched arms towards the table. She saw D'Avrigny curiously examining the glass, which she felt certain of having emptied during the night. It was now a third full, just as it was when she threw the contents into the ashes. The spectre of Valentine rising before the poisoner would have alarmed her less. It was indeed of the same colour as the draught she had poured into the glass, and which Valentine had drunk; it was indeed that poison which could not deceive the eye of M. d'Avrigny, and which he carefully examined. It was doubtless a miracle which God had wrought, so that notwithstanding her precautions, there should be some trace, some proof remaining to denounce the crime.

While Madame de Villefort remained rooted to the spot like a statue of Terror, and Villefort, with his head hidden in the

bed-clothes, saw nothing around him, D'Avrigny approached the window, that he might the better examine the contents of the glass, and dipping the tip of his finger in, tasted a drop. "Ah!" he exclaimed, "it is no longer brucine that is used; let me see what it is!" Then he ran to one of the cupboards in Valentine's room which had been transformed into a medicine closet, and taking from a silver case a small bottle of nitric acid, dropped a little of it into the liquor, which immediately changed to a blood-red colour. "Ah!" exclaimed D'Avrigny, in a voice in which the horror of a judge unveiling the truth was mixed with the delight of a student solving a problem. Madame de Villefort was overpowered; her eyes first flashed and then were blinded; she staggered towards the door, and disappeared. Directly afterwards the distant sound of a body falling on the floor was heard, but no one paid any attention to it; the nurse was engaged in watching the chemical analysis, and Villefort was still absorbed in grief. M. d'Avrigny alone had followed Madame de Villefort with his eyes, and watched her precipitate retreat. He drew aside the tapestry over the entrance to Edouard's room, and looking through to Madame de Villefort's apartment, he beheld her extended lifeless on the floor. "Go to the assistance of Madame de Villefort," he said to the nurse. "Madame de Villefort is ill."

"But Mademoiselle de Villefort—" stammered the nurse.

"Mademoiselle de Villefort no longer requires help," said D'Avrigny, "since she is dead."

"Dead! dead!" groaned forth Villefort, in a paroxysm of grief, which was the more terrible from the novelty of the sensation in the iron heart of that man.

"Dead, do you say?" cried a third voice. "Who said that Valentine was dead?"

The two men turned round and saw Morrel standing at the door, pale and terrible. This is what had happened: At the usual time, Morrel had presented himself at the little door leading to Noirtier's room. Contrary to custom, the door was open; and having no occasion to ring, he entered. He waited for a moment in the hall, and called for a servant to conduct him to M. Noirtier; but no one answered, the servants having, as we know, deserted the house. Morrel had no particular reason for uneasiness; Monte Cristo had promised him that Valentine should live; and until then he had always fulfilled his word. Every night the count had given him news, which the next morning was confirmed by Noirtier. Still, this extraordinary silence appeared strange to him, and he called a second

and third time; still no answer. Then he determined to go up. Noirtier's room was opened like all the rest. The first thing he saw was the old man sitting in his armchair in his usual place; but his eyes seemed to express an internal fright, and that expression was confirmed by the pallor which overspread his features.

"How are you, monsieur?" asked Morrel, not without a certain shrinking of the heart.

"Well!" answered the old man, by closing his eyes; but his face manifested increasing uneasiness.

"You are thoughtful, monsieur," continued Morrel; "you want something; shall I call one of the servants?"

"Yes," replied Noirtier.

Morrel pulled the bell, but though he nearly broke the cord, no one answered. He turned towards Noirtier; the pallor and anguish expressed on his countenance momentarily increased.

"Oh!" exclaimed Morrel, "why do they not come? Is any one ill in the house?"

The eyes of Noirtier seemed as though they would start from their sockets.

"What is the matter? You alarm me. Valentine! Valentine!"

"Yes, yes," signed Noirtier.

Maximilian tried to speak, but he could articulate nothing; he staggered, and supported himself against the wainscot. Then he pointed to the door.

"Yes, yes, yes!" continued the old man. Maximilian rushed up the little staircase, while Noirtier's eyes seemed to say, "Quicker! quicker!"

In a minute the young man darted through several rooms, till at length he reached Valentine's. There was no occasion to push the door, it was wide open. A sob was the first sound he heard. He saw, as though in a mist, a black figure kneeling and blending with a confused mass of white drapery. A terrible fear transfixed him. It was then that he heard a voice exclaim, "Valentine is dead!" and another voice which like an echo repeated, "Dead! dead!"

CHAPTER CIV

MAXIMILIAN

VILLEFORT rose, half-ashamed of being surprised in such a paroxysm of grief. The terrible office he had held for twenty-five years had succeeded in making him more or less than man. His glance, at first wandering, fixed itself upon Morrel. "Who are you, monsieur," he asked, "who forget that a house stricken with death is not to be thus entered? Go, monsieur, go!"

But Morrel remained motionless; he could not detach his eyes from that disordered bed, and the pale face of the young girl who was lying on it.

"Go! do you hear?" said Villefort, while D'Avrigny advanced to lead Morrel out. Maximilian stared for a moment at the corpse in a distracted manner, gazed all round the room, then upon the two men; he opened his mouth to speak, but finding it impossible to reply, notwithstanding the innumerable ideas that occupied his brain, he went out, thrusting his hands through his hair in such a manner that Villefort and D'Avrigny, for a moment diverted from the engrossing topic, exchanged glances which seemed to say, "He is mad!"

But in less than five minutes the staircase groaned beneath an extraordinary weight. Morrel was seen carrying with superhuman strength the armchair containing Noirtier upstairs. When he reached the landing, he placed the armchair on the floor and rapidly rolled it into Valentine's room. All this was done with a force that was increased tenfold by the frenzied excitement of the young man. But the most fearful spectacle was Noirtier approaching the bed, pushed by Morrel, his face expressing all his meaning, and his eyes supplying the want of every other faculty. That pale face and flaming glance appeared to Villefort like a frightful apparition. Every time he had been brought into contact with his father something terrible had happened.

"See what they have done!" cried Morrel, with one hand leaning on the back of the chair, and the other extended towards Valentine. "See, my father, see!"

Villefort drew back and looked with astonishment on the young man, who, almost a stranger to him, called Noirtier his father. At this moment the whole soul of the old man seemed centred in his eyes, which became bloodshot; the veins of the throat swelled; his cheeks and temples became purple, as

though he was struck with epilepsy. Nothing was wanting to exhibit that inward convulsion of his entire being but the utterance of a cry; and the cry issued, so to speak, from all his pores,—a cry frightful in its silence. D'Avrigny rushed towards the old man and made him inhale a powerful restorative.

"Monsieur!" cried Morrel, seizing the moist hand of the paralytic, "they ask me who I am, and what right I have to be here! Oh, you know it, tell them, tell them!" And the young man's voice was choked by sobs.

As for the old man, his chest heaved with his panting respiration. One could have thought he was undergoing the agonies preceding death. At length, tears glistened in the eyes of Noirtier, happier than the young man, who sobbed without weeping.

"Tell them," said Morrel, in a hoarse voice,—"tell them I was her betrothed. Tell them she was my noble beloved, my only love upon the earth. Tell them—oh! tell them that corpse belongs to me."

The young man, who presented the terrible spectacle of a strong frame crushed, fell heavily on his knees before the bed, which his fingers grasped with convulsive energy. D'Avrigny, unable to bear the sight of this touching emotion, turned away; and Villefort, without seeking any further explanation, and attracted towards him by the irresistible magnetism which draws us towards those who have loved the ones for whom we mourn, extended his hand towards the young man. But Morrel saw nothing; he had grasped the icy hand of Valentine, and unable to weep, he groaned, biting the sheets. For some time nothing was heard in that chamber but sobs, exclamations, and prayers. But over all was heard the hoarse, explosive breathing of Noirtier, which at every respiration seemed likely to break some spring of life within his breast. At length Villefort, the most composed of all, spoke. "Monsieur," said he to Maximilian, "you say that you loved Valentine, that you were betrothed to her. I knew nothing of this engagement, of this love, yet I, her father, forgive you, for I see your grief is real and deep; and besides, my own sorrow is too great for anger to find a place in my heart. But you see that the angel whom you hoped for has left this earth; she has nothing more to do with the adoration of men,—she who at this moment adores the Lord. Take a last farewell, monsieur, of her sad remains; take the hand you expected to possess once more within your own, and then separate yourself from her for ever. Valentine now needs only the priest who will bless her."

"You are mistaken, monsieur," exclaimed Morrel, raising himself on one knee, his heart pierced by a more acute pang than any he had yet felt,—"you are mistaken; Valentine, dying as she has, not only needs a priest, but an avenger. You, M. de Villefort, send for the priest; I will be the avenger."

"What do you mean, monsieur?" asked Villefort, trembling at Morrel's new outbreak of delirium.

"I tell you, monsieur, that two persons exist in you; the father has mourned sufficiently, now let the *procureur du roi* begin his duty."

The eyes of Noirtier glistened, and M. d'Avrigny approached.

"Gentlemen," said Morrel, reading all that passed through the minds of the witnesses to the scene, "I know what I am saying; and you know as well as I do what I am about to say,—Valentine has been assassinated!"

Villefort hung his head; D'Avrigny approached nearer; and Noirtier said "Yes!" with his eyes.

"Now, monsieur," continued Morrel, "in these days no one can disappear from the world by violent means without some inquiries being made as to the cause of her disappearance, even were she not a young, beautiful, and adorable creature like Valentine. M. le Procureur du roi," said Morrel, with increasing vehemence, "no mercy is allowed. I denounce the crime; it is your place to seek the assassin!"

The young man's implacable eyes interrogated Villefort, who on his side glanced from Noirtier to D'Avrigny. But instead of finding sympathy in the eyes of the doctor and his father, he saw only an expression as inflexible as that of Maximilian. "Yes!" indicated the old man; "Assuredly!" said D'Avrigny.

"Monsieur," said Villefort, striving to struggle against this threefold determination and against his own emotion,—"Monsieur, you are deceived; no one commits crimes here. I am stricken by fate; God is trying me. It is horrible indeed, but there is no assassination."

The eyes of Noirtier lighted up with rage, and D'Avrigny prepared to speak. Morrel, however, extended his arm, and commanded silence. "And I tell you that murders are committed here!" said Morrel, whose voice, though lower in tone, lost none of its terrible vibration. "I tell you that this is the fourth victim within the last four months. I tell you that Valentine's life was attempted by poison four days ago, though she escaped, owing to the precautions of M. Noirtier. I tell you that the dose has been doubled or the poison changed, and that this time it has succeeded. I tell you that you know these

things as well as I do, since this gentleman has forewarned you, both as a doctor and as a friend."

"Oh, you rave, monsieur!" exclaimed Villefort, in vain endeavouring to escape the net in which he was taken.

"I rave?" said Morrel; "well, then, I appeal to M. d'Avrigny himself. Ask him, monsieur, if he recollects some words he uttered in the garden of this house on the night of Madame de Saint-Méran's death. You thought yourselves alone, and talked about that tragical death, in regard to which that fatality of which you speak, and God whom you unjustly accuse, can be held accountable for one thing only,—for having created the assassin of Valentine." Villefort and D'Avrigny exchanged looks. "Yes, yes," continued Morrel; "recall the scene, for the words you thought were given to silence and solitude fell into my ears. Certainly, after witnessing the culpable indolence manifested by M. de Villefort towards his own relatives, I ought to have denounced him to the authorities; then I should not have been an accomplice in thy death, as I now am, sweet, beloved Valentine! But the accomplice shall become the avenger. This fourth murder is apparent to all; and if thy father abandon thee, Valentine, it is I—I swear it to thee—who will pursue the assassin." And this time, as though nature had at least taken compassion on the vigorous frame, nearly bursting with its own strength, the words of Morrel were stifled in his throat; his breast heaved in sobs; the tears, so long rebellious, gushed from his eyes; and he threw himself, weeping, on his knees by the side of the bed.

Then D'Avrigny spoke. "And I too," he exclaimed in a low voice, "I unite with M. Morrel in demanding justice for crime; my heart revolts at the idea of having encouraged a murderer by my cowardly concession."

"Oh, merciful heavens!" murmured Villefort, overwhelmed.

Morrel raised his head; and reading the eyes of the old man, which gleamed with unnatural lustre, "Stay," he said, "M. Noirtier wishes to speak."

"Yes," indicated Noirtier, with an expression the more terrible because all his faculties were concentrated in the language of his eyes.

"You know the assassin?" asked Morrel.

"Yes," replied Noirtier.

"And will you direct us?" exclaimed the young man. "Listen, M. d'Avrigny! listen!"

Noirtier looked upon the unhappy Morrel with a melancholy smile,—one of those tender smiles with the eyes which so often

had made Valentine happy,—and arrested his attention. Then, having riveted the eyes of his interlocutor on his own, he glanced towards the door.

"You wish me to leave?" said Morrel, sadly.

"Yes," replied Noirtier.

"Alas! alas! monsieur, have pity on me!"

The old man's eyes remained fixed on the door.

"May I at least return?" asked Morrel.

"Yes."

"Must I leave alone?"

"No."

"Whom am I to take with me,—M. le Procureur du roi?"

"No."

"The doctor?"

"Yes."

"You wish to remain alone with M. de Villefort?"

"Yes."

"But can he understand you?"

"Yes."

"Oh!" said Villefort, almost happy because the inquiries were to be made in private,—"oh, be satisfied, I can understand my father."

D'Avrigny took the young man's arm, and led him out of the room. A more than death-like silence then reigned in the house. At the end of a quarter of an hour a faltering footstep was heard, and Villefort appeared at the door of the apartment where D'Avrigny and Morrel had remained,—one meditating, the other suffering. "You can come," he said, and led them back to Noirtier. Morrel looked attentively on Villefort. His face was livid; large drops rolled down his cheeks; and in his fingers he held the fragments of a pen which he had torn to atoms. "Gentlemen," he said in a hoarse voice, "give me your word of honour that this horrible secret shall for ever remain buried among ourselves!" The two men drew back. "I entreat you—" continued Villefort.

"But," said Morrel, "the culprit—the murderer—the assassin!"

"Do not alarm yourself, monsieur; justice will be done," said Villefort. "My father has revealed the culprit's name; my father thirsts for revenge as much as you do, yet even he conjures you as I do to keep this secret. Do you not, father?"

"Yes," resolutely replied Noirtier.

Morrel suffered an exclamation of horror and surprise to escape him.

"Oh, monsieur!" said Villefort, arresting Maximilian by the arm, "if my father, the inflexible man, makes this request, it is because he knows, be assured, that Valentine will be terribly avenged. Is it not so, father?" The old man made a sign in the affirmative. Villefort continued, "He knows me, and I have pledged my word to him. Rest assured, gentlemen, that within three days, in a less time than justice would demand, the revenge I shall have taken for the murder of my child will be such as to make the boldest heart tremble;" and as he spoke these words, he ground his teeth and grasped the old man's senseless hand.

"Will this promise be fulfilled, M. Noirtier?" asked Morrel, while D'Avrigny looked inquiringly.

"Yes," replied Noirtier, with an expression of sinister joy.

"Swear then," said Villefort, joining the hands of Morrel and D'Avrigny, "swear that you will spare the honour of my house and leave me to avenge my child."

D'Avrigny turned round and uttered a very feeble "Yes;" but Morrel, disengaging his hand, rushed to the bed, and after having pressed the cold lips of Valentine with his own, hurriedly left, uttering the long groan of a soul sinking into despair.

We have before stated that all the servants had fled. M. de Villefort was therefore obliged to request M. d'Avrigny to superintend all those arrangements consequent upon a death in a large city, more especially a death under such suspicious circumstances. It was something terrible to witness the silent agony, the mute despair of Noirtier, whose tears silently rolled down his cheeks. Villefort retired to his study, and D'Avrigny left to summon the doctor of the mayoralty, whose office it is to examine bodies after decease, and who is expressly named "the doctor of the dead." M. Noirtier could not be persuaded to quit his grandchild. At the end of a quarter of an hour M. d'Avrigny returned with his associate. They found the outer gate closed; and since the porter had disappeared with the other servants, Villefort himself was obliged to open it. But he stopped on the landing; he had not the courage to revisit the chamber of death. The two doctors therefore entered the room alone. Noirtier was near the bed, pale, motionless, and silent as the corpse. The district doctor approached with the indifference of a man accustomed to spend half his time with the dead; he then lifted the sheet which was placed over the face, and slightly opened the lips.

"Alas!" said D'Avrigny, "she is indeed dead, poor child! You can leave."

"Yes," answered the doctor, laconically, dropping the sheet he had raised.

Noirtier uttered a kind of hoarse, rattling sound; the old man's eyes sparkled, and D'Avrigny understood that he wished to behold his child. He therefore approached the bed, and while his companion was dipping the fingers with which he had touched the lips of the corpse in chloride of lime, he uncovered that calm and pale face, which looked like that of a sleeping angel. A tear which appeared in the old man's eye expressed his thanks to the doctor. The doctor of the dead then laid his report on the corner of the table, and having performed the duties of his office, was conducted out by D'Avrigny. Villefort met them at the door of his cabinet. He thanked the doctor with a few words, and turning towards D'Avrigny, "And now," said he, "the priest?"

"Is there any particular priest you would have me call upon to pray with Valentine?" asked D'Avrigny.

"No," said Villefort; "bring the nearest."

"The nearest," said the district doctor, "is a good Italian abbé, who lives next door to you. Shall I call on him as I pass?"

"D'Avrigny," said Villefort, "be so kind, I beseech you, as to accompany this gentleman. Here is the key of the door, so that you can go in and out as you please. You will bring the priest with you, and will oblige me by introducing him into my child's room."

"Do you wish to see him?"

"I only wish to be alone. You will excuse me, will you not? A priest ought to understand all sorrows, even that of a father." And M. de Villefort, giving the key to D'Avrigny, again bade farewell to the strange doctor, and retired to his cabinet, where he began to work. For some temperaments work is a remedy in all afflictions.

As the doctors entered the street, they saw a man in a cassock standing on the threshold of the next door. "This is the abbé of whom I spoke," said the doctor to D'Avrigny.

D'Avrigny accosted the priest. "Monsieur," he said, "are you disposed to confer a great obligation on an unhappy father who has just lost his daughter? I mean M. de Villefort, the *procureur du roi*."

"Ah!" said the priest, with a marked Italian accent; "yes, I have heard that death is in that house."

"Then I need not tell you what kind of service he ventures to expect from you."

"I was about to offer myself, monsieur," said the priest; "it is our mission to forestall our duties."

"It is a young girl."

"I know it, monsieur; the servants who fled from the house informed me. I also know that her name is Valentine, and I have already prayed for her."

"Thank you, monsieur," said D'Avrigny; "since you have begun your sacred office, deign to continue it. Come and sit by the dead, and all the mourning family will be grateful to you."

"I will go, monsieur, and I do not hesitate to say that no prayers will be more fervent than mine."

D'Avrigny took the priest's hand, and without meeting Villefort, who was engaged in his study, they reached Valentine's room, which would not be occupied by the undertakers until the evening. As the abbé entered, Noirtier looked searchingly into his eyes; and no doubt he thought that he discerned in them a significant expression, for he remained in the room. D'Avrigny recommended the attention of the priest to the living as well as to the dead, and the abbé promised to devote his prayers to Valentine and his attentions to Noirtier. In order, doubtless, that he might not be disturbed while fulfilling his sacred mission, the priest, as soon as D'Avrigny departed, rose, and not only bolted the door through which the doctor had just left, but also that leading to Madame de Villefort's room.

CHAPTER CV

DANGLARS'S SIGNATURE

THE next morning opened dull and cloudy. During the night the undertakers had executed their melancholy office, and folded the corpse in a winding-sheet, which, whatever may be said about the equality of death, was a last proof of the luxury so pleasing in life. This winding-sheet was nothing else than a beautiful piece of cambric, which the young girl had bought a fortnight before. During the evening two men, engaged for the purpose, had carried Noirtier from Valentine's room into his own, and contrary to all expectation, there was no difficulty in withdrawing him from his child. The Abbé Busoni had watched till daylight, and then left without calling any one. D'Avrigny returned about eight o'clock in the morning; he met Villefort on his way to Noirtier's room,

and accompanied him to see how the old man had slept. They found him in the large armchair which served him for a bed, enjoying a calm, nay, almost a smiling sleep. They both stood in amazement at the door.

"See," said D'Avrigny to Villefort; "nature knows how to alleviate the deepest sorrow. No one can say that M. Noirtier did not love his child, and yet he sleeps."

"Yes, you are right," replied Villefort, surprised; "he sleeps indeed! And this is the more strange, since the least disturbance keeps him awake all night."

"Grief has stunned him," replied D'Avrigny; and they both returned thoughtfully to the cabinet of the *procureur du roi*.

"See; I have not slept," said Villefort, showing his undisturbed bed. "Grief does not stun me. I have not been in bed for two nights; but then look at my desk. See what I have written during these two days and nights. I have filled those papers, and have made out the accusation against the assassin Benedetto. Oh, work! work! my passion, my joy, my delight! it is for thee to alleviate my sorrows!" and he convulsively grasped the hand of D'Avrigny.

"Do you require my services now?" asked D'Avrigny.

"No," said Villefort; "only return again at eleven o'clock; at twelve the—the—oh, heavens! my poor, poor child!" and the *procureur du roi*, again becoming a man, lifted up his eyes and groaned.

"Shall you be present in the reception-room?"

"No; I have a cousin who has undertaken this sad office. I shall work, doctor; when I work I forget everything." And indeed, no sooner had the doctor left the room than Villefort was again absorbed in study.

On the doorsteps D'Avrigny met the cousin whom Villefort had mentioned, a personage as insignificant in our story as in the world he occupied,—one of those beings devoted from their birth to making themselves useful to others. He was punctual, dressed in black, with a crape round his hat, and presented himself at his cousin's with a face made up for the occasion, and which he could alter as might be required. At twelve o'clock the mourning-coaches rolled into the paved court, and the Rue du Faubourg St. Honoré was filled with a crowd of idlers, equally pleased to witness the festivities or the mourning of the rich, and who rush with the same avidity to a funeral procession as to the marriage of a duchess. Gradually the reception-room filled, and some of our old friends made their appearance,——Debray, Château-Renaud, and Beauchamp, accompanied by

all the leading men of the day, at the bar, in literature, or the army; for M. de Villefort moved in the first Parisian circles,—not so much on account of his social position as by force of personal merit. The cousin standing at the door ushered in the guests, and it was rather a relief to the indifferent to see a person as unmoved as themselves, and who did not exact a mournful face or forced tears, as he would had he been a father, a brother, or a lover. Those who were acquainted soon formed into little groups. One of those was composed of Debray, Château-Renaud, and Beauchamp.

"Poor girl!" said Debray, like the rest, paying an involuntary tribute to the sad event,—"poor girl, so young, so rich, so beautiful! Could you have imagined this scene, Château-Renaud, when we came—how long ago? three weeks, or at most, a month—to sign that contract which was not signed?"

"Indeed, no!" said Château-Renaud.

"Did you know her?"

"I spoke to her once or twice at Madame de Morcerf's, among the rest; she appeared to me charming, though rather melancholy. Where is her stepmother, do you know?"

"She is spending the day with the wife of the worthy man who is receiving us."

"Who is he?"

"Whom do you mean?"

"The man who receives us. Is he a deputy?"

"Oh, no. I am condemned to see our honourable deputies every day," said Beauchamp; "and his face is unknown to me."

"Have you mentioned this death in your paper?"

"It has been mentioned, but the article is not mine; indeed, I doubt if it will please M. de Villefort, for it says that if four successive deaths had happened anywhere else than in the house of the *procureur du roi*, he would have interested himself somewhat more about it."

"Still," said Château-Renaud, "Dr. d'Avrigny, who attends my mother, declares that Villefort is in despair. But whom are you seeking, Debray?"

"I am seeking the Count of Monte Cristo," said the young man.

"I met him on the boulevard, on my way hither," said Beauchamp. "I think he is about to leave Paris; he was going to his banker."

"His banker? Danglars is his banker, is he not?" asked Château-Renaud of Debray.

"I believe so," replied the secretary, with slight uneasiness. "But Monte Cristo is not the only one I miss here; I do not see Morrel."

"Morrel! Do they know him?" asked Château-Renaud.

"I think that he had been presented to Madame de Villefort only."

"Still, he ought to have been here," said Debray. "What will be talked about to-night? This funeral; it is the news of the day. But hush! here comes our minister of justice; he will feel obliged to make some little speech to the weeping cousin;" and the three young men drew near to listen.

Beauchamp had spoken truly. On his way to the funeral he had met Monte Cristo, who was directing his course towards the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin, to M. Danglars's. The banker saw the carriage of the count enter the courtyard, and advanced to meet him with a sad, though affable smile. "Well," said he, extending his hand to Monte Cristo, "I suppose you have come to sympathise with me, for indeed misfortune has taken possession of my house. When I perceived you, I was just asking myself whether I had not wished harm to those poor Morcerfs, which would have justified the proverb, 'He who wishes misfortunes to happen to others experiences them himself.' Well! on my word of honour, 'No!' I wished no ill to Morcerf. He was a little proud, perhaps, for a man who, like myself, had risen from nothing; but we all have our faults. Ah! observe, count, that persons of our time of life,—not that you belong to the class, you are still a young man,—persons of our time of life have been very unfortunate this year. For example, look at the puritanical *procureur du roi*, who has just lost his daughter, and in fact nearly all his family, in so singular a manner; Morcerf dishonoured and dead; and then myself covered with ridicule through the villainy of Benedetto; besides—"

"Besides what?" asked the count.

"Alas! do you not know?"

"What new calamity?"

"My daughter—"

"Mademoiselle Danglars?"

"Eugénie has left us!"

"Good heavens! what are you telling me?"

"The truth, my dear count. Oh, how happy you are in not having either wife or children!"

"Do you think so?"

"Indeed I do."

"And so Mademoiselle Danglars—"

"She could not endure the insult offered to us by that wretch, so she asked permission to travel."

"And she has gone?"

"The other night."

"With Madame Danglars?"

"No, with a relative. But still, we have quite lost our dear Eugénie; for I doubt whether her pride will ever allow her to return to France."

"Still, baron," said Monte Cristo, "family griefs, or indeed any other affliction which would crush a poor devil whose child was his only treasure, are endurable to a millionaire. Philosophers may well say, and practical men will always support the opinion, that money mitigates many trials; and if you admit the efficacy of this sovereign balm, you ought to be very easily consoled,—you, the king of finance, who form the intersecting point of all the powers!"

Danglars looked at him obliquely, as though to ascertain whether he spoke seriously. "Yes," he answered, "if a fortune brings consolation, I ought to be consoled; I am rich."

"So rich, my dear baron, that your fortune resembles the pyramids,—if you wished to demolish them, you could not; if it were possible, you would not dare!"

Danglars smiled at the good-natured pleasantry of the count. "That reminds me," he said, "that when you entered I was on the point of signing five little cheques. I have already signed two; will you allow me to sign the others?"

"Do it, my dear baron; do it."

There was a moment's silence, during which the noise of the banker's pen was alone heard, while Monte Cristo examined the gilt mouldings on the ceiling. "Are they Spanish, Haytian, or Neapolitan cheques?" said Monte Cristo.

"Neither," said Danglars, smiling, "they are checks on the bank of France, payable to bearer. Stay," he added, "count, you, who may be called the emperor, if I claim the title of king of finance, have you seen many pieces of paper of this size, each worth a million?"

The count took the papers, which Danglars had so proudly presented to him, into his hands, and read:—

To THE GOVERNOR OF THE BANK,—Please to pay to my order, from the fund deposited by me, the sum of a million, value on account.—BARON DANGLARS.

"One, two, three, four, five," said Monte Cristo; "five millions! why what a Crœsus you are!"

"This is how I transact business!" said Danglars.

"It is really wonderful," said the count; "above all, if, as I suppose, it is payable at sight."

"It is indeed," said Danglars.

"It is a fine thing to have such credit; really, it is only in France these things are done. Five millions on five little scraps of paper!—it must be seen to be believed."

"You do not doubt it?"

"No."

"You say so with an accent; stay, you shall be convinced. Take my clerk to the bank, and you will see him leave it with an order on the treasury for the same sum."

"No!" said Monte Cristo, folding the five notes, "most decidedly not; the thing is so curious I will make the experiment myself. I am credited with you for six millions. I have drawn nine hundred thousand livres; you therefore still owe me five millions and a hundred thousand livres. I will take the five scraps of paper, which I consider good with your signature alone, and here is a receipt in full for the six millions between us. I had prepared it beforehand, for I am much in want of money to-day." And Monte Cristo placed the cheques in his pocket with one hand, while with the other he held out the receipt to Danglars. If a thunderbolt had fallen at the banker's feet, he could not have experienced greater terror.

"What!" he stammered, "do you mean to take that money? Excuse me, excuse me! but I owe this money to the hospital,—a deposit which I promised to pay this morning."

"Oh, well, then!" said Monte Cristo, "I am not particular about these five notes, pay me in a different form; I wished, from curiosity, to take these, that I might be able to say that without any advice or preparation the house of Danglars had paid me five millions without a minute's delay. It would have been so remarkable. But here are your cheques; give me others instead." He held the five papers towards Danglars, who seized them like a vulture extending its claws through the bars of its cage to keep its hold on food which some one is trying to take away. Suddenly he rallied, made a violent effort to restrain himself, and then a smile gradually widened the features of his disturbed countenance.

"Certainly," he said; "your receipt is money."

"Oh, dear, yes; and if you were at Rome, the house of Thomson and French would make no more difficulty about paying the money on my receipt than you have just done."

"Pardon me, count, pardon me."

"Then I may keep this money?"

"Yes," said Danglars, while the perspiration started from the roots of his hair, "yes, keep it; keep it."

Monte Cristo replaced the notes in his pocket with that indescribable expression which seemed to say, "Come, reflect; if you repent there is still time."

"No," said Danglars, "no, decidedly no; keep my signatures. But you know none are so formal as bankers in transacting business. I intended this money for the hospital; and I had for a moment the notion that I was robbing it if I did not pay over these particular cheques,—as if one crown were not as good as another! Excuse me;" and he began to laugh loudly, but nervously.

"Certainly I excuse you," said Monte Cristo, graciously; "and I pocket them." And he placed the cheques in his pocket-book.

"But," said Danglars, "there is still a sum of one hundred thousand livres."

"Oh, a trifle!" said Monte Cristo. "The balance would come to about that sum; but keep it, and we shall be quits."

"Count," said Danglars, "are you speaking seriously now?"

"I never joke with bankers," said Monte Cristo, in a freezing manner, which repelled impertinence; and he turned to the door just as the *valet de chambre* announced, "M. de Boville, Receiver-General of the Hospitals."

"Faith!" said Monte Cristo; "I think I arrived just in time to obtain your signatures, or they would have been disputed with me."

Danglars again became pale, and hastened to take leave of the count. Monte Cristo exchanged a ceremonious bow with M. de Boville, who was standing in the waiting-room, and who was introduced into Danglars's room as soon as the count had left. A fleeting smile might have been observed on the count's face, ordinarily so serious, as he noticed the portfolio which the receiver-general held in his hand. At the door he found his carriage, and was immediately driven to the bank.

Meanwhile Danglars, repressing all emotion, advanced to meet the receiver-general. We need not say that a smile of courtesy was stamped upon his lips. "Good-morning, creditor," said he; "for I wager anything it is the creditor who visits me."

"You are right, baron," answered M. de Boville; "the hospitals present themselves to you through me. The widows

and orphans depute me to receive alms to the amount of five millions from you."

"And yet they say orphans are to be pitied," said Danglars, wishing to prolong the jest. "Poor things!"

"I have come, then, in their name," said M. de Boville; "but did you receive my letter yesterday?"

"Yes."

"I have brought my receipt."

"My dear M. de Boville, your widows and orphans must oblige me by waiting twenty-four hours, since M. de Monte Cristo, whom you just saw leaving here—you did see him, I think?"

"Yes; well?"

"Well, M. de Monte Cristo has just carried off their five millions."

"How is that?"

"The count has an unlimited credit upon me,—a credit opened by Thomson and French, of Rome; he came to demand five millions at once, which I paid him with a cheque on the bank. My funds are deposited there; and you can understand that if I draw out ten millions in one day it will appear rather strange to the governor. In two days," added Danglars, smiling, "it will be different."

"Come," said Boville, in a tone of incredulity; "five millions to that gentleman who just left, and who bowed to me as though I knew him!"

"Perhaps he knows you, though you do not know him; M. de Monte Cristo knows everybody."

"Five millions!"

"Here is his receipt. Do as Saint Thomas did. See and touch."

M. de Boville took the paper Danglars presented him, and read:—

"Received of Baron Danglars the sum of five millions one hundred thousand livres, which will be repaid whenever he pleases by the house of Thomson and French, of Rome."

"It is really true!" said Boville.

"Do you know the house of Thomson and French?"

"Yes, I once had business to transact with it to the amount of two hundred thousand livres, but since then I have not heard it mentioned."

"It is one of the best houses in Europe," said Danglars, carelessly throwing down the receipt on his desk.

"And he had five millions in your hands alone! Why, this Count of Monte Cristo must be a nabob!"

"Indeed, I do not know what he is; he has three unlimited credits,—one on me, one on Rothschild, one on Laffitte; and you see," he added carelessly, "he has given me the preference, and has left me one hundred thousand livres by way of commission."

M. de Boville manifested signs of extraordinary admiration. "I must visit him," he said, "and obtain some pious grant from him."

"Oh! you may make sure of him; his charities alone amount to more than twenty thousand livres per month."

"It is magnificent! I will set before him the example of Madame de Morcerf and her son."

"What example?"

"They gave all their fortune to the hospitals."

"What fortune?"

"Their own,—the property of General de Morcerf, deceased."

"For what reason?"

"Because they would not have money that was so guiltily acquired."

"And what are they to live upon?"

"The mother retires into the country, and the son enters the army."

"Well, I must confess, these are scruples!"

"I registered their deed of gift yesterday."

"And how much did they possess?"

"Oh, not much! from twelve to thirteen hundred thousand livres. But to return to our millions."

"Certainly," said Danglars, in the most natural tone in the world. "Are you, then, pressed for this money?"

"Yes; for the examination of our cash takes place to-morrow."

"To-morrow! Why did you not tell me so before? Why, it is as good as a century! At what hour does the examination take place?"

"At two o'clock."

"Send at twelve," said Danglars, smiling.

M. de Boville said nothing, but nodded his head, and took up the portfolio.

"Now I think of it, you can do better," said Danglars.

"How do you mean?"

"The receipt of M. de Monte Cristo is as good as money; take it to Rothschild's or Laffitte's, and they will cash it for you at once."

"What, though payable at Rome?"

"Certainly; it will only cost you a discount of five or six thousand livres."

The receiver started back. "Faith!" he said, "I prefer waiting until to-morrow. What a proposition!"

"I thought perhaps," said Danglars with supreme impertinence, "that you had a deficiency to make up."

"Ah!" said the receiver.

"And if that were the case it would be worth while to make some sacrifice."

"Thank God, no!" said M. de Boville.

"Then you will wait until to-morrow, my dear receiver?"

"Yes; but without fail?"

"Ah! you are laughing at me! Send to-morrow at twelve, and the bank shall be notified."

"I will come myself."

"Better still, since it will afford me the pleasure of seeing you." They shook hands.

"By the way," said M. de Boville, "you do not attend the funeral of poor Mademoiselle de Villefort, which I met on my way here?"

"No," said the banker; "I have appeared rather ridiculous since that affair of Benedetto, so I remain in the background!"

"Bah! you are wrong. How were you to blame in that affair?"

"Listen: when one bears an irreproachable name, as I do, one is rather sensitive."

"Every one sympathises with you, monsieur, and especially with Mademoiselle Danglars!"

"Poor Eugénie!" said Danglars; "do you know she is going to embrace a religious life?"

"No."

"Alas! it is unhappily but too true. The day after the event she decided on leaving Paris with a nun of her acquaintance; they have gone to seek a very strict convent in Italy or Spain."

"Oh! it is terrible!" and M. de Boville retired with this exclamation, uttering profuse expressions of condolence. But he had scarcely left when Danglars with a violent gesture, which those alone can understand who had seen Robert Macaire represented by Frédéric, exclaimed, "Fool!" Then, enclosing Monte Cristo's receipt in a little pocket-book, he added, "Yes, come at twelve o'clock; I shall then be far away." Then he double-locked his door, emptied all his drawers, collected about fifty thousand livres in bank-notes, burned several papers, left

others exposed to view, and then began writing a letter which he addressed, "To Madame la Baronne Danglars."

"I will place it on her table myself to-night," he murmured. Then taking a passport from his drawer, he said, "Good! it is available for two months longer."

CHAPTER CVI

THE CEMETERY

M. de Boville had indeed met the funeral procession which conducted Valentine to her last resting-place on earth. The weather was dull and cloudy; a cold wind shook the few remaining yellow leaves from the boughs of the trees, and scattered them among the crowd which filled the boulevards. M. de Villefort, a true Parisian, considered the cemetery of Père la Chaise alone worthy of receiving the mortal bodies of a Parisian family; there alone the remains of the deceased would be surrounded by worthy associates. He had therefore purchased a vault, which was quickly occupied by members of his family. On the front of the monument was inscribed. "Saint-Méran and Villefort," for such had been the last wish expressed by poor Renée, Valentine's mother. The pompous procession therefore wended its way from the Faubourg St. Honoré towards Père la Chaise. Having crossed Paris, it passed through the Faubourg du Temple; then leaving the exterior boulevards, it reached the cemetery. More than fifty private carriages followed the twenty mourning-coaches, and behind them more than five hundred persons joined the procession on foot.

These last consisted of young men and women, whom Valentine's death had struck like a thunderbolt; and who, notwithstanding the raw chilliness of the season, could not refrain from paying a last tribute to the memory of the beautiful, chaste, and adorable girl, thus cut off in the flower of her youth. As they left Paris, an equipage with four horses, arriving at full speed, was seen to draw up suddenly; it contained Monte Cristo. The count left the carriage and mingled in the crowd who followed on foot. Château-Renaud perceived him, and immediately alighting from his coupé, joined him. Beauchamp also left the cabriolet in which he was riding. The count looked attentively through every opening in the crowd; he was evidently watching for some one. "Where is Morrel?" he asked. "Do either of you gentlemen know where he is?"

"We have already asked that question," said Château-Renaud; "for none of us have seen him."

The count was silent, but continued to gaze around him. At length they arrived at the cemetery. The piercing eye of Monte Cristo glanced through clusters of bushes and trees; and he was soon relieved from all anxiety, for he saw a shadow glide between the yew-trees, and recognised him whom he sought.

A burial in this magnificent city of the dead is attended by incidents that are well known. Black figures are seen scattered in the long white avenues; the silence of earth and heaven is broken only by the noise made by the crackling branches of hedges planted around the monuments; then follows the melancholy chant of the priests, mingled now and then with a sob of anguish, escaping from some woman concealed under a mass of flowers. The shadow which Monte Cristo had remarked passed rapidly behind the tomb of Abelard and Héloïse, placed itself close to the horses' heads belonging to the hearse, and following the undertaker's men, arrived with them at the spot appointed for the burial. Every one's attention was occupied. Monte Cristo saw nothing but the shadow, which no one else observed. Twice the count left the ranks to see whether the object of his interest had any concealed weapon beneath his clothes. When the procession stopped, this shadow was recognised as Morrel; who, with his coat buttoned up to his throat, his face livid, and convulsively crushing his hat between his fingers, leaned against a tree situated on an elevation commanding the mausoleum, so that none of the funeral details could escape his observation. Everything was conducted in the usual manner. Certain men (and, as usual, they were less moved than others) pronounced discourses,—some deploring this premature death, others expatiating on the grief of the father; and one very ingenious person alleged that this young girl had more than once solicited pardon of her father for criminals on whom the arm of justice was ready to fall; until at length they exhausted their flowery metaphors and their dolorous periods.

Monte Cristo heard and saw nothing, or rather he saw only Morrel, whose calmness had a frightful effect on those who knew what was passing in his heart.

"See!" said Beauchamp, pointing out Morrel to Debray. "What is he doing up there?" And they called Château-Renaud's attention to him.

"How pale he is!" said Château-Renaud, shuddering.

"He is cold!" said Debray.

"Not at all," said Château-Renaud, slowly; "I think he is agitated. He is very susceptible."

"Bah!" said Debray; "he scarcely knew Mademoiselle de Villefort; you said so yourself."

"True. Still, I remember that he danced three times with her at Madame de Morcerf's. Do you recollect that ball, count, where you produced such an effect?"

"No, I do not," replied Monte Cristo, without even knowing of what or to whom he was speaking,—so much was he occupied in watching Morrel, who appeared to be holding his breath with emotion. "The discourses are ended; farewell, gentlemen," said the count. And he disappeared without any one seeing whither he went.

The funeral being over, the guests returned to Paris. Château-Renaud looked for a moment for Morrel; but while he had observed the departure of the count, Morrel had quitted his post, and Château-Renaud, failing in his search, joined Debray and Beauchamp.

Monte Cristo concealed himself behind a large tomb, and awaited the arrival of Morrel, who by degrees approached the tomb, now abandoned by spectators and workmen. Morrel looked around him slowly and vaguely; and while his gaze was directed away from the place where Monte Cristo was concealed, the latter came ten steps nearer to him, still unperceived. The young man knelt down. The count, with outstretched neck, his eyes fixed and dilated, his knees bent as if he were prepared to throw himself forward on a given signal, drew still nearer to Morrel. Morrel bent his head till it touched the stone, then clutching the grating with both hands, he murmured, "Oh, Valentine!"

The count's heart was pierced by the utterance of these two words; he stepped forward, and touching the young man's shoulder, said, "It is you, dear friend! I was looking for you."

Monte Cristo expected a burst of passion, but he was deceived, for Morrel, turning round, said with apparent calmness, "You see I was praying."

The scrutinising glance of the count searched the young man from head to foot. He then seemed more easy. "Shall I drive you back to Paris?" he asked.

"No, thank you."

"Do you wish anything?"

"Leave me to pray."

The count withdrew without opposition, but it was only to

place himself in a situation where he could watch every movement of Morrel, who at length rose, brushed the dust from his knees, and turned towards Paris, without once looking back. He walked slowly down the Rue de la Roguette. The count, dismissing his carriage, followed him about a hundred paces behind. Maximilian crossed the canal and entered the Rue Meslay by the boulevards. Five minutes after the door had been closed on Morrel's entrance, it was again opened for the count. Julie was at the entrance of the garden, where she was attentively watching Penelon, who, entering with zeal into his profession of a gardener, was very busy grafting some Bengal roses. "Ah, the Count of Monte Cristo!" she exclaimed, with the delight manifested by every member of the family whenever he visited the Rue Meslay.

"Maximilian has just returned, has he not, madame?" asked the count.

"Yes, I think I saw him pass; but pray call Emmanuel."

"Excuse me, madame, but I must go up to Maximilian's room this instant," replied Monte Cristo, "I have something of the greatest importance to tell him."

"Go then," she said with a charming smile, which accompanied him until he had disappeared. Monte Cristo ran up the staircase conducting from the ground-floor to Maximilian's room; when he reached the landing he listened attentively, but all was still. As in many old houses occupied by a single family, the room door was panelled with glass. But it was locked, Maximilian was shut in; and it was impossible to see what was taking place in the room, owing to a red curtain drawn before the glass. The count's anxiety was manifested by a bright colour,—a sign of emotion unusual with that impassive man. "What shall I do?" he murmured. He reflected for a moment. "Shall I ring? No, the sound of a bell, announcing a visitor, only accelerates the resolution of those situated as Maximilian may be at this moment; and then the sound of the bell is answered by another sound." He trembled from head to foot, and as with him decision came with the rapidity of lightning, he struck one of the panes of glass with his elbow, and the glass was shivered to atoms; then withdrawing the curtain, he saw Morrel, who had been writing at his desk, bound from his seat at the noise of the broken window.

"I beg a thousand pardons!" said the count; "there is nothing the matter, but I slipped and broke one of your panes of glass with my elbow. Since it is open, I will take advantage of it to enter your room; do not disturb yourself, do not

disturb yourself!" And passing his hand through the broken glass, the count opened the door.

Morrel, evidently discomposed, came to meet Monte Cristo, less with the intention of receiving him than to prevent his entrance.

"Faith!" said Monte Cristo, rubbing his elbow, "it is the fault of your servants; your stairs are so polished, it is like walking on glass."

"Are you hurt, monsieur?" coldly asked Morrel.

"I believe not. But what are you doing there? You were writing?"

"I?"

"Your fingers are stained with ink."

"Ah, true, I was writing. I do sometimes, soldier though I am."

Monte Cristo advanced into the room; Maximilian was obliged to let him pass, but he followed him.

"You were writing?" said Monte Cristo, with a searching look.

"I have already had the honour of telling you that I was," said Morrel.

The count looked around him. "Your pistols beside your desk!" said Monte Cristo, pointing with his finger to the pistols on the table.

"I am on the point of starting on a journey," replied Morrel.

"My friend!" exclaimed Monte Cristo, in a tone of exquisite sweetness.

"Monsieur!"

"My friend, my dear Maximilian, do not make a hasty resolution, I entreat you."

"I make a hasty resolution?" said Morrel, shrugging his shoulders; "is there anything extraordinary in a journey?"

"Maximilian," said the count, "let us both lay aside the mask we have assumed. You no more deceive me with that false calmness than I impose upon you with my frivolous solicitude. You can understand, can you not, that to have acted as I have done, to have broken that window, to have intruded on the solitude of a friend,—you can understand that to have done all this I must have been actuated by real uneasiness, or rather by a terrible conviction. Morrel, you are intending to destroy yourself!"

"Indeed, count!" said Morrel, shuddering, "what has put that into your head?"

"I tell you that you are intending to destroy yourself," con-

tinued the count; "and here is the proof of what I say." And approaching the desk, he removed the sheet of paper which Morrel had placed over the letter he had begun, and took the latter in his hands.

Morrel rushed forward to tear it from him; but Monte Cristo, perceiving his intention, seized his wrist with his iron grasp. "You see, you intend to destroy yourself," said the count; "you have written it."

"Well!" said Morrel, changing his expression of calmness for one of violence,—"well, and if I do intend to turn this pistol against myself, who shall prevent me? Who will dare prevent me? When I say that all my hopes are blighted, my heart is broken, my life is extinguished, everything around me is sad and mournful, the earth has become ashes, every human voice wounds me; when I say that it is a mercy to let me die, for if I live I shall lose my reason and become mad; come, monsieur, tell me,—when I say this, when it is evident that I say it in agony and with tears from my heart, will any one say to me, 'You are wrong;' will any one try to prevent my escape from misery? Tell me, monsieur, is it you who will have that courage?"

"Yes, Morrel," said Monte Cristo, with a calmness which contrasted strangely with the young man's excitement,—"yes, I would do so."

"You!" exclaimed Morrel, with increasing anger and vehemence,—"you, who have deceived me with false hopes, who have cheered and soothed me with vain promises, when I might have saved her, or at least have seen her die in my arms; you, who pretend to possess all the resources of knowledge, all the powers of matter; you, who play the rôle of Providence, and could not even find an antidote to a poison administered to a young girl! Ah! in very truth, monsieur, you would inspire me with pity if you did not fill me with horror!"

"Morrel!"

"Yes; you tell me to lay aside the mask, and I will do so, be satisfied! When you spoke to me at the cemetery, I answered you,—my heart was softened; when you arrived here, I allowed you to enter. But since you take advantage; since you come to provoke me in the chamber to which I had retired as to my tomb; since you have devised a new torture after I thought I had exhausted them all,—Count of Monte Cristo, my pretended benefactor, Count of Monte Cristo, the universal guardian, be satisfied, you shall witness the death of your friend;" and Morrel, with a maniacal laugh, again rushed towards the pistols.

Monte Cristo, pale as a ghost, but with eyes flashing lightning, laid his hand upon the weapons and said to the madman, "I repeat to you that you will not kill yourself."

"Prevent me, then!" replied Morrel, with another struggle, which, like the first, was fruitless against the count's arm of steel.

"I will prevent you."

"And who are you, then, that arrogate to yourself this tyrannical right over free and rational beings?"

"Who am I?" repeated Monte Cristo. "Listen; I am the only man in the world who has the right to say to you, 'Morrel, your father's son shall not die to-day.'" And Monte Cristo, majestic, transfigured, sublime, advanced with his arms folded towards the young man, who, conquered in spite of himself by the almost divine authority of this man, recoiled a step.

"Why do you speak of my father?" stammered he. "Why do you mingle a recollection of him with the affairs of to-day!"

"Because I am he who saved your father's life when he wished to destroy himself, as you wish to destroy yourself to-day; because I am the man who sent the purse to your young sister, and the *Pharaon* to old Morrel; because I am Edmond Dantès, who played with you, a child on my knees."

Morrel made another step backwards, staggering, breathless, crushed; then all his strength gave may, and with a loud cry he fell prostrate at the feet of Monte Cristo. Then, all at once, in that admirable nature a movement of regeneration took place, sudden and complete; he rose, bounded out of the room, and rushed to the stairs, calling at the top of his voice, "Julie, Julie! Emmanuel! Emmanuel!"

Monte Cristo endeavoured also to leave, but Maximilian would have died rather than relax his hold of the handle of the door, which he closed upon the count. Julie, Emmanuel, and some of the servants ran up in alarm on hearing the cries of Maximilian. Morrel seized their hands, and opening the door, exclaimed in a voice choked with sobs, "On your knees! on your knees! he is our benefactor! the saviour of our father! He is—"

He would have added "Edmond Dantès," but the count seized his arm and prevented him. Julie threw herself into the arms of the count; Emmanuel embraced him as a guardian angel; Morrel again fell on his knees and struck the floor with his forehead. Then the iron-hearted man felt his heart swell in his breast; a flame seemed to rush from his throat to his eyes; he bent his head and wept. For a while nothing was heard in

the room but a succession of sobs, while the incense from their grateful hearts mounted to heaven. Julie had scarcely recovered from her deep emotion when she rushed out of the room, descended to the next floor, ran into the drawing-room with childlike joy, and raised the crystal globe which covered the purse given by the unknown of the Allées de Meillan.

Meanwhile Emmanuel, in a broken voice, said to the count, "Oh, count, how could you, hearing us so often speak of our unknown benefactor, seeing us pay such homage of gratitude and adoration to his memory, how could you continue so long without discovering yourself to us? Oh, it was cruel to us, and —dare I say it?—to yourself also!"

"Listen, my friend," said the count; "I may call you so, since without suspecting it, you have been my friend for eleven years,—the discovery of this secret has been occasioned by a great event, of which you are ignorant. God is my witness that I wished to bury it during my whole life in my own bosom, but your brother Maximilian wrested it from me by a violence of which, I am sure, he now repents." Then turning round and seeing that Morrel, still on his knees, had thrown himself into an armchair, he added in a low voice, pressing Emmanuel's hand significantly, "Watch over him."

"Why so?" asked the young man, surprised.

"I cannot explain myself; but watch over him."

Emmanuel looked round the room, and caught sight of the pistols; his eyes rested on the weapons, and he pointed to them. Monte Cristo bent his head. Emmanuel went towards the pistols.

"Leave them," said Monte Cristo. Then walking towards Morrel, he took his hand; the tumultuous agitation which for a moment had stirred the heart of the young man had given place to a profound stupor. Julie returned, holding in her hands the silken purse, while tears of joy rolled down her cheeks like drops of morning dew.

"Here is the relic," she said; "do not think it will be less dear to us now that we are acquainted with our benefactor!"

"My child," said Monte Cristo, colouring, "allow me to take back that purse. Since you now know my face, I wish to be remembered only through the affection I hope you will grant me."

"Oh," said Julie, pressing the purse to her heart, "no, no, I beseech you, do not take it; for some unhappy day you will leave us, will you not?"

"You have guessed rightly, madame," replied Monte Cristo, smiling; "in a week I shall have left this country, where so

many persons who merit the vengeance of Heaven lived happily while my father perished of hunger and grief."

While announcing his departure, the count fixed his eyes on Morrel, and remarked that the words, "I shall have left this country," had failed to rouse him from his lethargy. He then saw that he must make another struggle against the grief of his friend, and taking the hands of Emmanuel and Julie, which he pressed within his own, he said with the mild authority of a father, "My kind friends, leave me alone with Maximilian."

Julie saw that she could carry off her precious relic, which Monte Cristo had forgotten. She drew her husband to the door. "Let us leave them," she said.

The count was alone with Morrel, who remained motionless as a statue.

"Come," said Monte Cristo, touching his shoulder with his finger, "are you a man again, Maximilian?"

"Yes, for I begin to suffer again."

The count frowned, apparently in gloomy hesitation. "Maximilian, Maximilian," he said, "the ideas you yield to are unworthy of a Christian."

"Oh, do not fear, my friend," said Morrel, raising his head, and showing to the count a smile impressed with unspeakable sorrow, "I shall no longer attempt my life."

"Then we are to have no more pistols, no more arms?"

"No; I have found a better remedy for my grief than either a bullet or knife."

"Poor fellow! what is it?"

"My grief will kill me of itself."

"My friend," said Monte Cristo, with an expression of melancholy equal to his own, "listen to me. One day, in a moment of despair like yours, since it led to a similar resolution, I, like you, wished to kill myself; one day your father, equally desperate, also wished to kill himself. If any one had said to your father, at the moment when he raised the pistol to his head, if any one had told me, when in my prison I pushed back the food I had not tasted for three days, if any one had said to either of us then, 'Live! the day will come when you will be happy, and will bless life!'—no matter whose voice had spoken, we should have heard him with the smile of doubt, or the anguish of incredulity; and yet how many times has your father blessed life while embracing you! How often have I myself—"

"Ah!" exclaimed Morrel, interrupting the count, "you had lost only your liberty, my father had lost only his fortune, but I—I have lost Valentine."

"Look at me, Morrel," said Monte Cristo, with that solemnity which sometimes made him so grand and so persuasive,—"look at me; there are no tears in my eyes, nor is there fever in my veins, yet I see you suffer—you, Maximilian, whom I love as my own son. Well, does not this tell you that grief is like life, and that there is always something to look forward to beyond? Now, if I entreat, if I order you to live, Morrel, it is in the conviction that one day you will thank me for having preserved your life."

"Oh, heavens!" said the young man, "oh, heavens! what are you saying, count? Take care! But perhaps you have never loved!"

"Child!" replied the count.

"I mean as I love. You see, I have been a soldier ever since I attained manhood; I reached the age of twenty-nine without loving, for none of the feelings I before then experienced deserve the name of love. Well, at twenty-nine I saw Valentine; during two years I have loved her, during two years I have seen written in her heart, as in a book, all the virtues of a daughter and wife. Count, to possess Valentine would have been a happiness infinite, immense, unheard of,—a happiness too great, too complete, too divine for this world. Since this world has not permitted it to me, count, without Valentine there remains for me upon the earth only despair and desolation."

"I have told you to hope," said the count.

"Then, have a care, I repeat, for you seek to persuade me, and if you succeed I shall lose my reason, for you will make me believe that I shall again behold Valentine."

The count smiled.

"My friend, my father," said Morrel, with excitement, "have a care, I say for the third time, for the power you wield over me alarms me. Weigh your words before you speak, for my eyes have already become brighter, and my heart revives; have a care, or you will make me believe in supernatural agencies. I should obey you if you directed me to raise the stone from the sepulchre which entombs the daughter of Jairus; I should walk upon the waves like the apostle, if you should give me direction with your hand to walk upon the waves; be careful, for I should obey."

"Hope, my friend," repeated the count.

"Ah," said Morrel, falling from the height of his exaltation to the abyss of despair,—"ah, you are playing with me, like those good, or rather, selfish mothers who soothe their children

with honeyed words, because their screams annoy them.' No, my friend, I was wrong to caution you; do not fear, I will bury my grief so deep in my heart, I will disguise it so that you will not even care to sympathise with me. Adieu, my friend, adieu!"

"On the contrary," said the count, "from this time you must live with me,—you must not leave me; and in a week we shall have left France behind us."

"And you still bid me hope?"

"I tell you to hope, because I know a way to cure you."

"Count, you render me sadder than before, if it be possible. You think the result of this blow has been to produce an ordinary grief, and you would cure it by an ordinary remedy,—change of scene." And Morrel shook his head with disdainful incredulity.

"What can I say more?" asked Monte Cristo. "I have confidence in the remedy I propose, and only ask you to permit me to try the experiment."

"Count, you only prolong my agony."

"Then," said the count, "your feeble spirit will not even grant me the trial I request? Come! do you know of what the Count of Monte Cristo is capable? Do you know that he holds many of the terrestrial forces under his control? Do you know that he has enough faith in God to obtain miracles from him who said that with faith man can move mountains? Well, wait for the miracle I hope to accomplish, or—"

"Or?" repeated Morrel.

"Or, take care, Morrel, lest I call you ungrateful."

"Have pity on me, count!"

"I feel so much pity towards you, Maximilian, that—listen to me attentively—if I do not cure you in a month, to the day, to the very hour, mark my words, Morrel, I will place loaded pistols before you, and a cup full of the deadliest Italian poison,—a poison more sure and prompt than that which has killed Valentine."

"You promise me that?"

"Yes, for I am a man; for I too, as I told you, have wished to die. Indeed, often since misfortune has left me I have thought of the delights of an eternal sleep."

"But you are sure you will promise me this?" said Morrel, intoxicated.

"I not only promise, but swear it!" said Monte Cristo, extending his hand.

"In a month, then, on your honour, if I am not consoled, you

will let me take my life into my own hands, and whatever I may do with it, you will not call me ungrateful?"

"In a month to the day; the very hour and the date is a sacred one, Maximilian. I do not know whether you remember that this is the 5th of September; it is ten years to-day since I saved your father's life, who wished to die."

Morrel seized the count's hand and kissed it; the count allowed him to pay the homage that he felt was due to him. "In a month," continued Monte Cristo, "you will find on the table at which we shall be then sitting good pistols and a pleasant death; but, on the other hand, you must promise me not to attempt your life before that time."

"Oh! I also swear it."

Monte Cristo drew the young man towards him, and pressed him for some time to his heart. "And now," he said, "after to-day, you will come and live with me; you can occupy Haydée's apartment, and my daughter will at least be replaced by my son."

"Haydée?" said Morrel, "what has become of her?"

"She departed last night."

"To leave you?"

"To wait for me. Hold yourself ready, then, to join me at the Champs Elysées; and lead me out of this house without any one seeing my departure."

Maximilian hung his head, and obeyed like a child or like an apostle.

CHAPTER CVII

THE DIVISION

THE first floor of the house in the Rue St. Germain des Prés, chosen by Albert and Madame de Morcerf for their residence, comprising one small *appartement*, complete, was let to a very mysterious person. This was a man whose face the *concierge* himself had never seen; for in the winter his chin was buried in one of those large red handkerchiefs worn by gentlemen's coachmen on a cold night, and in the summer he made a point of always blowing his nose just as he approached the door. Contrary to custom, this gentleman had not been watched, for as the report ran that he was a person of high rank, and one who would allow no impertinent interference, his incognito was strictly respected. His visits were tolerably regular, though occasionally he appeared a little before or after his time; but

generally, both in summer and winter, he took possession of his *appartement* about four o'clock, though he never spent the night there. At half-past three in the winter, the fire was lighted by the discreet servant who had the superintendence of the little *appartement;* and in the summer ices were placed on the table by the same servant. At four o'clock, as we have already stated, the mysterious personage arrived. Twenty minutes afterwards a carriage stopped at the house, a lady alighted in a black or dark-blue dress, and always thickly veiled; she passed like a shadow through the lodge, and ran upstairs without a sound escaping under the touch of her light foot. No one ever asked her where she was going. Her face therefore, like that of the gentleman, was entirely unknown to the two *concierges,* who were perhaps the only ones in the great brotherhood of porters in the capital who were capable of such discretion. We need not say that she stopped at the first floor. Then she tapped at a door in a peculiar manner, which, after being opened to admit her, was again fastened, and all was done. The same precautions were used in leaving as on entering the house. The lady went out first, always veiled, and stepped into her carriage, which immediately disappeared, sometimes at one end of the street, sometimes at the other; then, about twenty minutes afterwards, the gentleman would also leave, buried in his cravat or concealed by his handkerchief.

The day after Monte Cristo had called upon Danglars, the day of Valentine's funeral, the mysterious lodger entered at ten o'clock in the morning instead of four in the afternoon. Almost directly afterwards, without the usual interval of time, a carriage arrived, and the veiled lady ran hastily upstairs. The door opened, but before it could be closed the lady exclaimed, "Oh, Lucien! oh, my friend!" The *concierge* therefore heard for the first time that the lodger's name was Lucien; still, as he was a model door-keeper, he resolved not to tell it even to his wife.

"Well, what is the matter, my dear?" asked the gentleman whose name the lady's agitation had revealed; "tell me, what is the matter?"

"Oh, Lucien! can I depend upon you?"

"Of course; you know you can do so. But what is the matter? Your note of this morning has completely bewildered me. That haste—that confused writing—come, ease me of my anxiety, or else frighten me once for all."

"Lucien, a great event has happened!" said the lady, looking inquiringly at Debray; "M. Danglars went away last night!"

"Went away! M. Danglars has gone away! And where has he gone?"

"I do not know."

"What do you mean? You do not know? Has he then gone away not intending to return?"

"Undoubtedly. At ten o'clock at night his horses took him to the barrier of Charenton; there a post-chaise was waiting for him; he entered it with his *valet de chambre*, saying to the coachman that he was going to Fontainebleau."

"Then what did you mean—"

"Stay! he left a letter for me."

"A letter?"

"Yes; read it." And the baroness took from her pocket a letter which she gave to Debray.

Debray paused a moment before reading, as if trying to guess its contents, or perhaps to make up his mind how to act, whatever it might contain. No doubt his ideas were arranged in a few minutes, for he began reading the letter which caused so much uneasiness in the heart of the baroness, and which ran as follows:—

MADAME AND MOST FAITHFUL WIFE.

Without thinking, Debray stopped and looked at the baroness, who blushed to her eyes. "Read," she said.

Debray continued:—

When you receive this, you will no longer have a husband! Oh! you need not be alarmed, you will have lost him only as you have lost your daughter; I mean that I shall be travelling on one of the thirty or forty roads leading out of France. I owe you some explanations for my conduct, and as you are a woman that can perfectly understand them, I will give them. Listen, then: a payment of five millions was demanded of me this morning, which I made; almost immediately afterwards another demand for the same sum was presented to me; I postponed this creditor till to-morrow, and I intend leaving to-day to escape that to-morrow, which would be rather too unpleasant for me to endure. You understand this, do you not, my most precious wife? I say you understand this, because you are as conversant with my affairs as I am; indeed, I think you understand them better, since I am ignorant of what has become of a considerable portion of my fortune, once very tolerable, while I am sure, madame, that you are very well informed about it. For women have infallible instincts,—they can even explain the marvellous by an algebraic calculation which they have invented; but I, who understand only my own figures, know nothing more than that one day these figures deceived me. Have you admired the rapidity of my fall? Have you been slightly dazzled at the sudden fusion of my ingots? I confess I have seen nothing but the fire; let us hope you have found some gold among

the ashes. With this consoling idea I leave you, madame and most prudent wife, without any conscientious reproach for abandoning you; you have friends left, and the ashes I have already mentioned, and, above all, the liberty I hasten to restore to you. And here, madame, I must add another word of explanation. So long as I hoped you were working for the good of our house and for the fortune of our daughter, I philosophically closed my eyes; but as you have transformed that house into a vast ruin, I will not be the foundation of another man's fortune. You were rich when I married you, but little respected. Excuse me for speaking so very candidly; but as this is intended only for ourselves, I do not see why I should weigh my words. I have augmented our fortune, and it has continued to increase during the last fifteen years, till extraordinary and unexpected catastrophes have suddenly overturned it, without any fault of mine, I can honestly declare. You, madame, have only sought to increase your own, and I am convinced you have succeeded. I leave you, therefore, as I took you,—rich, but little respected. Adieu! I also intend from this time to work on my own account. Accept my acknowledgments for the example you have set me, and which I intend following. Your very devoted husband,—BARON DANGLARS.

The baroness had watched Debray while reading this long and painful letter, and saw him, notwithstanding his self-control, change colour once or twice. When he had ended the perusal, he folded the letter and resumed his pensive attitude.

"Well?" asked Madame Danglars, with an anxiety easy to be understood.

"Well, madame?" repeated Debray, mechanically.

"With what ideas does that letter inspire you?"

"Oh, it is simple enough, madame; it inspires me with the idea that M. Danglars has gone away with suspicions."

"Certainly; but is this all you have to say to me?"

"I do not understand you," said Debray, with freezing coldness.

"He is gone!—gone, never to return!"

"Oh, madame! do not think that!"

"I tell you that he will never return. I know his character; he is inflexible in any resolutions formed for his own interests. If he could have made any use of me, he would have taken me with him; he leaves me in Paris, as our separation will serve his purposes. He has gone, then, and I am free for ever," added Madame Danglars, in the same supplicating tone.

Debray, instead of answering, allowed her to remain in an attitude of nervous inquiry.

"Well?" she said at length, "do you not answer me?"

"I have but one question to ask you; what do you intend to do?"

"I was going to ask you," replied the baroness, with a beating heart.

"Ah! then you wish to ask advice of me?"

"Yes; I do wish to ask your advice," said Madame Danglars, with anxious expectation.

"Then if you wish to take my advice," said the young man, coldly, "I would recommend you to travel."

"To travel!" she murmured.

"Certainly; as M. Danglars says, you are rich, and perfectly free. In my opinion, a withdrawal from Paris is absolutely necessary after the double catastrophe of Mademoiselle Danglars's broken contract and M. Danglars's disappearance. It is important that the world should think you abandoned and poor; for the wife of a bankrupt would never be forgiven were she to keep up the appearance of opulence. You have only to remain in Paris for about a fortnight, telling the world that you are abandoned, and relating the details of this desertion to your best friends, who will soon spread the report. Then you can quit your house, leaving your jewels and giving up your jointure, and every one's mouth will be filled with praises of your disinterestedness. They will know that you are deserted, and think you also poor; for I alone know your real financial position, and am quite ready to give up my accounts as an honest partner."

The dread with which the baroness, pale and motionless, listened to this, was equalled by the calm indifference with which Debray had spoken. "Abandoned!" she repeated; "ah, yes, I am indeed abandoned! You are right, monsieur, and no one can doubt my position." These were the only words which that woman, so proud and so deeply in love, could reply to Debray.

"But then you are rich,—very rich indeed," continued Debray, taking out some papers from his pocket-book, which he spread upon the table. Madame Danglars paid no attention to him,—fully engaged in stilling the beatings of her heart and restraining the tears which were ready to gush forth. At length a sense of dignity prevailed; and if she did not entirely master her agitation, she at least succeeded in preventing the fall of a single tear.

"Madame," said Debray, "it is nearly six months that we have been associated. You furnished a principal of one hundred thousand livres. Our partnership began in the month of April. In May we commenced operations, and in the course of the month gained four hundred and fifty thousand livres. In June the profit amounted to nine hundred thousand. In July we added one million seven hundred thousand livres; it was, you know,

the month of the Spanish bonds. In August we lost three hundred thousand livres at the beginning of the month, but on the 13th we made up for it; and we now find that our accounts, reckoning from the first day of partnership up to yesterday, when I closed them, showed a capital of two million four hundred thousand livres,—that is, one million two hundred thousand for each of us. Now, madame," said Debray, delivering up his accounts in the methodical manner of a stockbroker, "there are still eighty thousand livres, the interest of this money, in my hands."

"But," said the baroness, "I thought you never put the money out at interest?"

"Excuse me, madame," said Debray, coldly; "I had your permission to do so, and I have made use of it. There are, then, forty thousand livres for your share, besides the one hundred thousand you furnished me to begin with, making, in all, one million three hundred and forty thousand livres for your portion. Now, madame, I took the precaution of drawing out your money the day before yesterday; it is not long ago, you see, and I might be suspected of continually expecting to be called on to deliver up my accounts. There is your money, half in bank-notes, the other half in cheques payable to the bearer. I say *there*, for as I did not consider my house safe enough, nor lawyers sufficiently discreet, and as landed property carries evidence with it, and moreover, since you have no right to possess anything independent of your husband, I have kept this sum, now your whole fortune, in a chest concealed under that closet, and for greater security, I myself fastened it in. Now, madame," continued Debray, first opening the closet, then the chest,—"now, madame, here are eight hundred notes of one thousand livres each, resembling, as you see, a large book bound in iron; to this I add a dividend of twenty-five thousand livres; then, for the odd cash, making, I think, about one hundred and ten thousand livres, here is a check upon my banker, who, not being M. Danglars, will pay you the amount, you may rest assured."

Madame Danglars mechanically took the cheque, the dividend, and the heap of bank-notes. This enormous fortune made no great appearance on the table. Madame Danglars, with tearless eyes, but with her breast heaving with concealed emotion, placed the bank-notes in her bag, put the dividend and cheque into her pocket-book, and then, standing pale and mute, awaited one kind word of consolation. But she waited in vain.

"Now, madame," said Debray, "you have a splendid fortune, an income of about sixty thousand livres a year, which is

enormous for a woman who cannot keep an establishment here for a year at least. You will be able to indulge all your fancies; besides, should you find your income insufficient, you can, for the sake of the past, madame, make use of mine; and I am ready to offer you all I possess, on loan."

"Thank you, monsieur, thank you," replied the baroness; "you understand that what you have just paid me is much more than a poor woman requires who intends for some time at least to retire from the world."

Debray was for a moment surprised, but immediately recovering himself, he bowed with an air which seemed to say,—

"As you please, madame."

Madame Danglars had until then, perhaps, hoped for something; but when she saw the careless gesture of Debray, and the indirect glance by which it was accompanied, and observed the profound bow and significant silence which followed, she raised her head, and without passion or violence, but also without hesitation, she ran downstairs, disdaining to address a last farewell to one who could thus part from her.

"Bah!" said Debray, when she had left, "these are fine projects! she will remain at home, read novels, and speculate at cards, since she can no longer do so on the Bourse."

Then, taking up his account-book, he cancelled with the greatest care all the amounts he had just paid away. "I have a million and sixty thousand livres remaining," he said. "What a pity Mademoiselle de Villefort is dead! She suited me in every respect, and I would have married her." And he calmly waited till the twenty minutes had elapsed after Madame Danglars's departure before he left the house. During this time he occupied himself in making figures, with his watch by his side.

Asmodeus—that diabolical personage, who would have been created by every fertile imagination, if Le Sage had not acquired the priority in his celebrated work—would have enjoyed a singular spectacle, if he had lifted up the roof of the little house in the Rue St. Germain des Prés while Debray was casting up his figures. Above the room in which Debray had been dividing two millions and a half with Madame Danglars was another, inhabited by persons who have played so prominent a part in the events we have related that we encounter them again with considerable interest. Mercédès and Albert were in that room. Mercédès was much changed within the last few days,—not that even in her days of fortune she had ever dressed with that magnificent display which makes us no longer able to recognise

a woman when she appears in a plain and simple attire; nor indeed had she fallen into that state of depression where it is impossible to conceal the garb of misery. No, the change in Mercédès was that her eye no longer sparkled, her lips no longer smiled, and there was now a hesitation in uttering the words which formerly fell so fluently from her ready wit. It was not poverty which had broken her spirit; it was not a want of courage which rendered her poverty burdensome. Mercédès, descended from the exalted position she had occupied, lost in the sphere she had now chosen, like a person passing from a room splendidly lighted into utter darkness,—Mercédès appeared like a queen fallen from her palace to a hovel, and who, reduced to mere necessities, could neither become reconciled to the earthen vessels she was herself forced to place upon the table, nor to the humble pallet which had taken the place of her bed. The beautiful Catalane and noble countess had lost both her proud glance and charming smile, because she saw nothing but misery around her. The walls were hung with one of those grey papers which economical landlords choose as not likely to show the dirt; the floor was uncarpeted; the furniture attracted the attention to the poor attempt at luxury; indeed, everything offended the eyes accustomed to refinement and elegance.

Madame de Morcerf had lived there since leaving her hotel. The continual silence of the place oppressed her; still, seeing that Albert constantly watched her countenance to ascertain the state of her feelings, she constrained herself to assume a monotonous smile of the lips alone, which, contrasted with the sweet and beaming expression that usually shone from her eyes, seemed like a simple reflection of light; that is, light without warmth. Albert too was ill at ease, embarrassed by the habit of luxury which prevented his conforming to his actual position. If he wished to go out without gloves, his hands appeared too white; if he wished to walk through the town, his boots seemed too highly polished. Yet these two noble and intelligent creatures, united by the indissoluble ties of maternal and filial love, had succeeded in comprehending each other without speaking, and in economising the preliminaries employed among friends to arrive at that plain-speaking truthfulness on which so much depends; and Albert had at last been able to say to his mother without making her turn pale, "Mother, we have no more money." Mercédès had never known misery; she had often in her youth spoken of poverty, but between those two synonyms, want and necessity, there is a wide difference. Among the Catalans, Mercédès wished for a thousand things,

but certain others she was never without. So long as the nets were good, they caught fish; and so long as they sold their fish, they were able to buy thread for new nets. And then, shut out from friendship, having but one affection, which counted for nothing in the material details of the situation, she thought of herself, of no one but herself. With the little that she had she met her share of the expense as generously as possible; now she had two shares to meet,—and that with nothing.

Winter approached. Mercédès had no fire in that cold and naked room,—she, who was accustomed to a furnace with a thousand branches, which heated the house from the hall to the boudoir; she had not even one little flower,—she, whose apartment had been a conservatory of costly exotics. But she had her son. Hitherto the excitement of fulfilling a duty had sustained them. Excitement, like enthusiasm, sometimes renders us unconscious of the things of earth. But the excitement had calmed down, and they felt themselves obliged to descend from dreams to reality; after having exhausted the ideal, they found they must talk of the actual.

"Mother!" exclaimed Albert, just as Madame Danglars was descending the stairs, "let us reckon our riches, if you please; I want a capital to build my plans upon."

"Capital! nothing!" replied Mercédès, with a mournful smile.

"No, mother; capital, three thousand livres. And I have an idea of our leading a delightful life upon this three thousand livres."

"Child!" sighed Mercédès.

"Alas, dear mother!" said the young man, "I have unhappily spent too much of your money not to know the value of it. These three thousand livres are an enormous sum, and I intend building upon this foundation a miraculous certainty for the future."

"You say this, my dear boy; but do you think we ought to accept these three thousand livres?" said Mercédès, colouring.

"I think so," answered Albert, in a firm tone. "We will accept them the more readily, since we do not yet possess them; you know they are buried in the garden of the little house in the Allées de Meillan, at Marseilles. With two hundred livres we can reach Marseilles."

"With two hundred livres? Think well, Albert."

"Oh! as for that, I have made inquiries respecting the diligencies and steamboats, and my calculations are made.

You will take your place in the coupé to Châlons,—you see, mother, I treat you like a queen,—thirty-five livres."

Albert then took a pen and wrote:—

Coupé, thirty-five livres	35	livres.
From Châlons to Lyons, by steamboat, six livres .	6	"
From Lyons to Avignon (still by steamboat), sixteen livres	16	"
From Avignon to Marseilles, seven livres . .	7	"
Expenses on the road, about fifty livres . . .	50	"
Total	114	livres.

"Let us call it one hundred and twenty," added Albert, smiling. "You see I am generous; am I not, mother?"

"But you, my poor child?"

"I! do you not see that I reserve eighty livres for myself? A young man does not require luxuries; besides, I know what travelling is."

"With a post-chaise and *valet de chambre*."

"Any way, mother."

"Well, be it so. But these two hundred livres?"

"Here they are, and two hundred more besides. See, I have sold my watch for one hundred livres, and the guard and seals for three hundred. How fortunate that the trinkets were worth more than the watch. Still the same story of superfluities! Now I think we are rich, since, instead of the one hundred and fourteen livres you require for the journey, you find yourself in possession of two hundred and fifty."

"But we owe something in this house?"

"Thirty livres; but I pay that out of my one hundred and fifty livres,—that is understood. And as I require only eighty livres for my journey, you see that I swim in luxury. But that is not all. What do you say to this, mother?"

And Albert took out a little pocket-book with golden clasps, —a remnant of his old fancies, or perhaps a tender token from one of those mysterious and veiled ladies who used to knock at his little door,—Albert took out of this pocket-book a note of one thousand livres.

"What is this?" asked Mercédès.

"A thousand livres, mother. Oh, it is perfectly correct."

"But whence have you obtained them?"

"Listen to me, mother, and do not yield too much to agitation." And Albert, rising, kissed his mother on both cheeks, then stood looking at her. "You cannot imagine, mother, how beautiful I think you!" said the young man, impressed with a

profound feeling of filial love. "You are indeed the most beautiful and most noble woman I ever saw!"

"Dear child!" said Mercédès, endeavouring in vain to restrain a tear which glistened in the corner of her eye.

"Indeed, you needed only to be unhappy to change my love for you to admiration."

"I am not unhappy while I have my son," said Mercédès; "and I shall not be unhappy so long as I have him."

"Ah! we come to that," said Albert; "but here begins the trial. You know the decision we have come to, mother?"

"Have we come to any?"

"Yes; it is decided that you are to live at Marseilles, and that I am to leave for Africa, where I will earn for myself the right to use the name I now bear, instead of the one I have thrown aside." Mercédès sighed. "Well, mother! I yesterday engaged myself in the Spahis," added the young man, lowering his eyes with a certain feeling of shame, for even he was unconscious of the sublimity of his self-abasement. "I thought my body was my own, and that I might sell it. I yesterday took the place of another. I sold myself for more than I thought I was worth," he added, attempting to smile; "that is to say, for two thousand livres."

"Then these one thousand livres—" said Mercédès, shuddering.

"Are the half of the sum, mother; the other will be paid in a year."

Mercédès raised her eyes to heaven with an expression it would be impossible to describe, and tears, which had hitherto been restrained, now reinforced by her emotion, ran down her cheeks.

"The price of his blood!" she murmured.

"Yes, if I am killed," said Albert, laughing. "But I assure you, mother, I have a strong intention of defending my person; and I never felt half so strong an inclination to live as at present."

"Merciful heavens!"

"Besides, mother, why should you make up your mind that I am to be killed? Has Lamoricière, that Ney of the South, been killed? Has Changarnier been killed? Has Bedeau been killed? Has Morrel, whom we know, been killed? Think of your joy, mother, when you see me return with an embroidered uniform! I declare, I expect to look magnificent in it, and chose that regiment only from vanity."

Mercédès sighed while endeavouring to smile. The devoted mother felt that she ought not to allow the whole weight of the sacrifice to fall upon her son.

"Well! now you understand, mother!" continued Albert; "here are more than four thousand livres settled on you. Upon these you will live at least two years."

"Do you think so?" said Mercédès.

These words were uttered in so mournful a tone that their real meaning did not escape Albert; he felt his heart beat, and taking his mother's hand within his own, he said tenderly, "Yes, you will live!"

"I shall live! then you will not leave me, Albert?"

"Mother, I must go," said Albert, in a firm, calm voice; "you love me too well to wish me to remain useless and idle with you; besides, I have signed."

"You will obey your own will, my son, and I—I will obey the will of God."

"Not my own wish, mother, but reason—necessity. Are we not two despairing creatures? What is life to you? Nothing. What is life to me? Very little without you, mother; for, believe me, but for you, I should have ceased to live on the day I doubted my father, and renounced his name. Well, I will live if you promise me still to hope; and if you grant me the privilege of caring for your future comfort, you will redouble my strength. Then I will go to the Governor of Algeria; he has a royal heart, and is essentially a soldier. I will tell him my gloomy story. I will beg him to turn his eyes now and then towards me; and if he keep his word, and interest himself for me, in six months I shall be an officer, or dead. If I am an officer, your fortune is certain, for I shall have money enough for both, and, moreover, a name we shall both be proud of, since it will be our own. If I am killed—well, then, mother, you can also die if you wish, and our misfortunes will come to an end through their excess."

"It is well," replied Mercédès, with her eloquent glance; "you are right, my love; let us prove to those who are watching our actions that we are at least worthy of compassion."

"But let us not yield to gloomy apprehensions," said the young man; "I assure you we are, or rather we shall be very happy. You are a woman at once full of spirit and resignation; I have become simple in my tastes, and am without passion, I hope. Once in service, I shall be rich; once in M. Dantès's house, you will be at rest. Let us strive, I beseech you,—let us strive to be cheerful."

"Yes, let us strive, for you ought to live, and to be happy, Albert."

"And so our division is made, mother," said the young man,

affecting ease of mind. "We can set out to-day; come, I shall engage your place as we have agreed."

"And you, my dear boy?"

"I shall stay here for a few days longer; we must accustom ourselves to parting. I want recommendations and some information relative to Africa. I will join you again at Marseilles."

"Well, be it so! let us go," said Mercédès, folding round her shoulders the only shawl she had taken away, and which accidentally happened to be a valuable black cashmere. Albert gathered up his papers hastily, rang the bell to pay the thirty livres he owed to the landlord, and offering his arm to his mother, he descended the stairs. Some one was walking down before them, and this person, hearing the rustling of a silk dress, turned round. "Debray!" muttered Albert.

"You, Morcerf!" replied the secretary, resting on the stairs. Curiosity had vanquished the desire of preserving his incognito; and besides, he was recognised. It was indeed strange to find in this unknown spot the young man whose misfortunes had made so much noise in Paris.

"Morcerf!" repeated Debray. Then, noticing in the dim light the still youthful figure and the black veil of Madame de Morcerf, "Pardon me!" he added with a smile; "I leave you, Albert."

Albert understood his thoughts. "Mother," he said, turning towards Mercédès, "this is M. Debray, secretary of the Minister of the Interior, once a friend of mine."

"How once?" stammered Debray; "what do you mean?"

"I say so, M. Debray, because I have no friends now; and I ought not to have any. I thank you for having recognised me, monsieur."

Debray stepped forward and cordially pressed the hand of his interlocutor. "Believe me, dear Albert," he said with all the emotion he was capable of feeling,—"believe me, I feel deeply for your misfortunes, and if in any way I can serve you, I am yours."

"Thank you, monsieur," said Albert, smiling. "In the midst of our misfortunes we are still rich enough not to require assistance from any one. We are leaving Paris; and when our fares are paid, we shall have five thousand livres left."

The blood mounted to the temples of Debray, who had a million in his pocket-book; and, unimaginative as he was, he could not help reflecting that the same house had contained two women, one of whom, justly dishonoured, had left it poor

with one million five hundred thousand livres under her cloak, while the other, unjustly stricken, but sublime in her misfortune, was yet rich with a few deniers. This parallel disturbed his usual politeness; philosophy illustrated by example overwhelmed him. He muttered a few words of general civility, and ran downstairs. That day the minister's clerks and the subordinates had a great deal to put up with from his ill-humour. But the same night he found himself the possessor of a fine house, situated on the Boulevard de la Madeleine, and an income of fifty thousand livres.

The next day, just as Debray was signing the deed,—that is, about five o'clock in the afternoon,—Madame de Morcerf, after having affectionately embraced her son, entered the diligence, which closed upon her. A man was hidden in Laffitte's banking-house behind one of the little arched windows which are placed above each desk. He saw Mercédès enter the diligence; he saw the diligence start; he saw Albert withdraw. Then he passed his hand over his forehead, which was clouded with doubt. "Alas!" he exclaimed, "how can I restore the happiness I have taken away from these poor innocent creatures? God help me!"

CHAPTER CVIII

THE LIONS' DEN

One division of La Force, in which the most dangerous and desperate prisoners are confined, is called the Court of St. Bernard. The prisoners, in their expressive language, have named it the Lions' Den, probably because the captives possess teeth which frequently gnaw the bars, and sometimes the keepers also. It is a prison within a prison. The walls are of twice the thickness of the other walls. The gratings are every day carefully examined by jailers whose herculean proportions and cold, pitiless expression prove them to have been chosen to reign over their subjects by the power of fear and the alertness of their minds. The courtyard of this quarter is enclosed by enormous walls, over which the sun glances obliquely, when it deigns to penetrate into this gulf of moral and physical deformity. On this paved yard are to be seen, pacing from morning till night, pale, careworn, and haggard, like so many shadows, the men whom Justice holds beneath the steel she is sharpening. There, crouched against the side of the wall which attracts and retains the most heat, they may be seen, sometimes

talking to one another in couples, but more frequently alone, watching the door, which sometimes opens to call forth one from the gloomy assemblage, or to throw in another outcast from society.

The Court of St. Bernard has its own particular parlour; it is a long rectangle, divided by two upright gratings, placed at a distance of three feet from one another, to prevent a visitor from shaking hands with or passing anything to the prisoners. It is a wretched, damp, nay, even horrible spot, more especially when we consider the fearful conferences which have taken place through those iron bars. And yet, frightful though this spot may be, it is considered as a kind of paradise to the men whose days are numbered; it is so rare for them to leave the Lions' Den for any other place than the barrier St. Jacques or the galleys or the dungeon cell!

In the court which we have attempted to describe, and from which a damp vapour was rising, a young man might be seen walking with his hands in his pockets who had excited much curiosity among the inhabitants of the Den. The cut of his clothes would have made him pass for an elegant man if those clothes had not been torn to ribbons; still, they were not spoiled by wear, and the fine cloth soon recovered its gloss in the parts which were still intact beneath the careful hands of the prisoner, who tried to make it look like new cloth. He bestowed the same attention upon the cambric front of a shirt, which had considerably changed in colour since his entrance into the prison; and he brushed his polished boots with the corner of a handkerchief embroidered with initials surmounted by a coronet. Some of the inmates of the Lions' Den were watching the operations of the prisoner's toilet with considerable interest.

"See! the prince is beautifying himself," said one of the thieves.

"He is naturally very handsome," said another; "and if he had only a comb and some pomatum, he would soon eclipse all the gentlemen in white kids."

"His coat looks nearly new, and his boots are brilliant. It is flattering to us to have comrades who are so stylish; and those gendarmes behaved shamefully. What jealousy, to tear such clothes!"

"He appears to be some one of consequence," said another; "he dresses in first-rate style. And then to be here so young! Oh, it is splendid!"

Meanwhile the object of this hideous admiration approached

the wicket, against which one of the keepers was leaning. "Come, monsieur," he said, "lend me twenty livres. You will soon be paid; you run no risks with me. Remember, I have relatives who possess more millions than you have deniers. Come, I beseech you, lend me twenty livres, so that I may buy a dressing-gown; it is intolerable always to be in a coat and boots! And what a coat, monsieur, for a Prince Cavalcanti!" The keeper turned his back, and shrugged his shoulders. He did not even laugh at what would have caused any one else to do so; he had heard so many say the same things,—indeed, he heard nothing else.

"Come," said Andrea, "you are a man void of compassion; I will cause you to lose your place."

This made the keeper turn round, and he burst into a loud laugh. The prisoners then approached and formed a circle.

"I tell you that with that wretched sum," continued Andrea, "I could obtain a coat, and a room in which to receive the illustrious visitor I am daily expecting."

"He is right! he is right!" said the prisoners; "and one can see he is a gentleman!"

"Well, then, lend him the twenty livres," said the keeper, leaning on the other shoulder; "surely you will not refuse a comrade!"

"I am no comrade of these people," said the young man, proudly; "you have no right to insult me thus."

The thieves looked at one another with low murmurs, and a storm gathered over the head of the aristocratic prisoner, raised less by his own words than by the manner of the keeper. The latter, sure of quelling the tempest when the waves became too violent, allowed them to rise to a certain pitch that he might be revenged on the importunate solicitor; and besides, it would afford him some recreation during the long day. The thieves had already approached Andrea, some screaming "*La savate! La savate!*"—a cruel operation which consisted in flogging any comrade who may have fallen into disgrace, not with an old shoe (*savate*), but with an iron-heeled one. Others proposed *l'anguille*, another kind of recreation, in which a handkerchief is filled with sand, pebbles, and halfpence when they have them, which the wretches wield like a flail upon the head and shoulders of the unhappy sufferer; "Let us horsewhip the fine gentleman!" said others.

But Andrea, turning towards them, winked his eyes, rolled his tongue round his cheeks, and smacked his lips in a manner equivalent to a hundred words among bandits reduced to silence.

It was a masonic sign which Caderousse had taught him. He was immediately recognised as one of them; the handkerchief was thrown down, and the iron-heeled shoe replaced on the foot of the leading persecutor. Some voices were heard to say that the gentleman was right; that he had a right to be as stylish as he pleased; and that they would set the example of liberty of conscience. The mob retired. The keeper was so stupefied at this scene that he took Andrea by the hands, and began examining his person, attributing the sudden submission of the inmates of the Lions' Den to something more substantial than mere fascination. Andrea made no resistance, though he protested against it. Suddenly a voice was heard at the wicket. "Benedetto!" exclaimed an inspector. The keeper relaxed his hold.

"I am called," said Andrea.

"To the parlour!" said the same voice.

"You see some one pays me a visit. Ah, my dear monsieur, you will see whether a Cavalcanti is to be treated like a common person!" And Andrea, gliding through the court like a black shadow, rushed out through the wicket, leaving his comrades, and even the keeper, lost in wonder.

No one could be less surprised by this summons to the parlour than was Andrea himself. For the wily young man, since his entrance into La Force, instead of using, as others did, the privilege of writing to get himself claimed, had maintained the most stoical silence. "Evidently," he said to himself, "I am protected by some powerful person; everything proves it to me,—that sudden fortune; the facility with which I have overcome all obstacles; an unexpected family and an illustrious name awarded to me; gold showered down upon me, and the most splendid alliances about to be entered into. An unhappy lapse of fortune and the absence of my protector have reduced me certainly, but not for ever. The hand which is withdrawn for a moment will be again stretched forth to save me at the very moment when I shall think myself sinking into the abyss! Why should I risk an imprudent step? It might alienate my protector. He has two means of extricating me from this dilemma,—he may contrive for me, by bribery, a mysterious escape; or he may buy up my judges with gold. I will say and do nothing until I am convinced that he has quite abandoned me; and then—"

Andrea had formed a plan which was tolerably clever. The unhappy youth was intrepid in attack, and rude in defence. He had borne with the public prison, and with privations of

all sorts; still, by degrees nature, or rather custom, had prevailed, and he suffered from being naked, dirty, and hungry. It was at this moment of disgust that the inspector's voice called him to the parlour. Andrea felt his heart leap with joy. It was too soon for a visit from the examining judge, and too late for one from the director of the prison or the doctor; it must, then, be the visitor he had hoped for.

Behind the grating of the room into which Andrea had been led, he saw, while his eyes dilated with surprise, the dark and intelligent face of M. Bertuccio, who was also gazing with sad astonishment upon the iron bars, the bolted doors, and the shadow which moved behind the other grating.

"Ah!" said Andrea, deeply affected.

"Good-morning, Benedetto," said Bertuccio, with his deep, hollow voice.

"You! you!" said the young man, looking around him with alarm.

"Do you not recognise me, unhappy child?"

"Silence! be silent!" said Andrea, who knew the delicate sense of hearing possessed by the walls; "for Heaven's sake, do not speak so loud!"

"You wish to speak with me alone, do you not?" said Bertuccio.

"Oh, yes!"

"That is well!" And Bertuccio, feeling in his pocket, signed to a keeper whom he saw through the window of the wicket.

"Read!" he said.

"What is that?" asked Andrea.

"An order to conduct you to a room, and to leave you there to talk with me."

"Oh!" cried Andrea, leaping with joy. Then he mentally added, "Still my unknown protector! I am not forgotten. They wish for secrecy, since we are to converse in a private room. I understand,—Bertuccio has been sent by my protector."

The keeper spoke for a moment with a superior, then opened the iron gates, and conducted Andrea to a room on the first floor. The room was whitewashed, as is the custom in prisons; but it looked quite brilliant to a prisoner, though a stove, a bed, a chair, and a table, formed the whole of its sumptuous furniture. Bertuccio sat down upon the chair; Andrea threw himself upon the bed; the keeper retired.

"Now," said the steward, "what have you to tell me?"

"And you?" said Andrea.

"It is for you to speak first."

"Oh, no! You must have much to tell me, since you have come to seek me."

"Well, be it so! You have continued your course of villainy; you have robbed; you have assassinated."

"Good! If you had me taken to a private room only to tell me this, you might have saved yourself the trouble. I know all these things. But there are some with which, on the contrary, I am not acquainted. Let us talk of those, if you please. Who has sent you?"

"Come, come, you are going fast, M. Benedetto!"

"Yes, and to the point! Let us dispense with useless words. Who sends you?"

"No one."

"How did you know I was in prison?"

"I recognised you, some time since, as the insolent dandy who so gracefully mounted his horse in the Champs Elysées."

"Oh, the Champs Elysées! Ah, ah! we burn, as they say in the game of *la pincette*. The Champs Elysées! Come, let us talk a little about my father!"

"Who, then, am I?"

"You, monsieur? You are my adopted father. But it is not you, I presume, who placed at my disposal one hundred thousand livres, which I spent in four or five months; it is not you who manufactured an Italian gentleman for my father; it is not you who introduced me into the world, and had me invited to a certain dinner at Auteuil, which I fancy I am eating at this moment, in company with the most distinguished people in Paris, with a certain *procureur du roi*, whose acquaintance I did very wrong not to cultivate, for he would have been very useful to me just now,—it is not you, in short, who will go on my bail-bond for one or two millions, now that the fatal discovery of my secret has taken place. Come, speak, my worthy Corsican, speak!"

"What do you wish me to say?"

"I will help you. You were speaking of the Champs Elysées just now, worthy foster-father!"

"Well?"

"Well, in the Champs Elysées there resides a very rich gentleman."

"At whose house you robbed and murdered, did you not?"

"I believe I did."

"The Count of Monte Cristo?"

"You have named him. Well, am I to rush into his arms and strain him to my heart, crying, as they do on the stage, 'My father! my father?'"

"Do not let us jest," gravely replied Bertuccio; "and let not such a name be uttered here as you have dared to utter it."

"Bah!" said Andrea, a little overcome by the solemnity of Bertuccio's manner, "why not?"

"Because the person who bears that name is too highly favoured by heaven to be the father of such a wretch as you!"

"Oh, these are fine words!"

"And there will be fine doings, if you do not take care!"

"Threats! I do not fear them. I will say—"

"Do you think that you have to do with pygmies like yourself?" said Bertuccio, in so calm a tone, and with so steadfast a look that Andrea was moved to the very soul. "Do you think that you have to do with galley-slaves, or novices in the world? Benedetto, you are fallen into terrible hands; they are ready to open for you; make use of them! Do not play with the thunderbolt they have laid aside for a moment, but which they can take up again instantly, if you attempt to intercept their movements."

"My father—I will know who my father is!" said the obstinate youth; "I will perish if I must, but I will know it. What does scandal signify to me? What possessions, what reputation have I? You great people always lose something by scandal, notwithstanding your millions. Come, who is my father?"

"I have come to tell you."

"Ah!" cried Benedetto, his eyes sparkling with joy.

Just then the door opened, and the jailer, addressing himself to Bertuccio, said, "Excuse me, monsieur, but the examining judge is waiting for the prisoner."

"And so closes our interview," said Andrea to the worthy steward; "to the devil with the marplot!"

"I will return to-morrow," said Bertuccio.

"Good! Gendarmes, I am at your service. Ah, dear monsieur, do leave a few crowns for me at the gate, that I may have some things I am in need of!"

"It shall be done," replied Bertuccio.

Andrea extended his hand; Bertuccio kept his own in his pocket, and merely jingled a few pieces of money. "That's what I mean," said Andrea, endeavouring to smile, quite overcome by the strange tranquillity of Bertuccio. "Can I be deceived!" he murmured, as he stepped into the oblong and

grated vehicle which they call "the salad basket." "Never mind, we shall see! Then, to-morrow!" he added, turning towards Bertuccio.

"To-morrow!" replied the steward.

CHAPTER CIX

THE JUDGE

We remember that the Abbé Busoni remained alone with Noirtier in the chamber of death, and that the old man and the priest were the sole guardians of the young girl's body. Perhaps it was the Christian exhortations of the abbé, perhaps his gentle kindness, perhaps his persuasive words, which had restored the courage of Noirtier; for ever since he had conversed with the priest, his violent despair had yielded to a calm resignation which surprised all who knew his deep affection for Valentine.

M. de Villefort had not visited his father since the morning of the death. The whole establishment had been changed; another *valet de chambre* was engaged for himself, and a new servant for Noirtier; two women had entered Madame de Villefort's service; in fact, all, including the *concierge* and coachman, were new servants, erected, so to speak, between the several heads of that accursed house, and thus intercepting the relations, already sufficiently cold, which existed among them.

The assizes were to open in two or three days; and Villefort, shut up in his room, devoted himself with feverish zeal to preparing the case against the murderer of Caderousse. This affair, like all those with which the Count of Monte Cristo was connected, caused a great sensation in Paris. The proofs were certainly not convincing, since they rested upon a few words written by an escaped galley-slave on his death-bed, who might have been actuated by hatred or revenge in accusing his companion. But the mind of the *procureur du roi* was made up; he felt assured that Benedetto was guilty, and he expected to procure from that difficult triumph one of those joys of self-love which only could excite, in some small degree, the fibres of his frozen heart.

The case was therefore ready, owing to the incessant labour of Villefort, who wished it to be the first on the list in the coming assizes. He had been obliged to seclude himself more than ever, to evade the enormous number of applications made to him for

tickets of admission to the court on the day of trial. So short a time had elapsed since the death of poor Valentine, and the gloom which overshadowed the house was so recent, that no one wondered to see the father absorbed in his professional duties, which were his only distraction from grief.

Once only had Villefort seen his father; it was the day after that upon which Bertuccio had paid his second visit to Benedetto, when the latter was to learn his father's name. The magistrate, harassed and fatigued, had descended to the garden of his hotel, and under the influence of his implacable resolution, as Tarquin lopped off the tallest poppies, he knocked off with his cane the long and dying branches of the rose-trees, which, placed along the avenue, seemed like the spectres of the brilliant flowers which had bloomed in the past season. More than once he had reached that part of the garden where the famous paling stood overlooking the deserted enclosure; and always returning by the same path, he continued his walk at the same pace and with the same bearing. He accidentally turned his eyes towards the house, where he heard the sound of his son playing noisily, who had returned from school to spend the Sunday and Monday with his mother. At that moment, he observed M. Noirtier at one of the open windows, where the old man had been placed that he might enjoy the last rays of a sun which yet yielded some heat, and was now shining upon the dying flowers and red leaves of the creeper which twined round the balcony.

The old man's gaze was fixed upon a spot which Villefort could scarcely distinguish. His glance was so full of hate, of ferocity, and savage impatience, that Villefort, quick to seize all the expressions of that countenance so well known to him, turned out of the path he had been pursuing, to see upon what person this dark look was directed. Then he saw beneath a thick clump of linden-trees which were nearly divested of foliage Madame de Villefort sitting with a book in her hand, the perusal of which she frequently interrupted to smile upon her son, or to throw back his elastic ball, which he obstinately threw from the drawing-room into the garden. Villefort became pale; he understood the old man's meaning. Noirtier continued to look at the same object, but suddenly his glance was transferred from the wife to the husband, and Villefort himself had to submit to the attack of those thunderous eyes, which, while changing their object and even their language, had lost none of their menacing expression. Madame de Villefort, unconscious of all those passions that exhausted their fire over her head, at that moment held her son's ball and was making signs to him

to reclaim it with a kiss. Edouard begged for a long while, the maternal kiss probably not offering sufficient recompense for the trouble he must take to obtain it; however, at length he decided, leaped out of the window into a cluster of heliotropes and daisies, and ran to his mother, his forehead streaming with perspiration. Madame de Villefort wiped his forehead, pressed her lips upon it, and sent him back with the ball in one hand and some bonbons in the other.

Villefort, drawn by an irresistible attraction, like that of the bird to the serpent, walked towards the house. As he approached it, Noirtier's gaze followed him, and his eyes appeared of such fiery brightness that Villefort felt them pierce to the depths of his heart. In that earnest look might be read a deep reproach as well as a terrible menace. Then Noirtier raised his eyes to heaven, as though to remind his son of a forgotten oath. "It is well, monsieur," replied Villefort from below,—"it is well; have patience but one day longer; what I have said, I will do." Noirtier appeared calmed by these words, and turned his eyes with indifference in another direction. Villefort violently unbuttoned his greatcoat, which seemed to strangle him, and passing his livid hand across his forehead, entered his study. The night was cold and still; the family had all retired to rest but Villefort, who worked till five o'clock in the morning, reviewing the last interrogatories made the night before by the examining magistrates, compiling the depositions of the witnesses, and putting the finishing stroke to the indictment, which was one of the most energetic and best conceived which he had yet drawn up.

The next day, Monday, the first session of the assizes was to take place. The morning opened black and gloomy; and Villefort saw the dim grey light shine upon the lines he had traced in red ink. The magistrate had slept for a short time while the lamp sent forth its last gleams; its flickerings awoke him, and he found his fingers as damp and purple as though they had been dipped in blood. He opened the window; a bright yellow streak crossed the sky, and cut in two the poplars, which stood out in black relief on the horizon. In the clover-fields beyond the chestnut-trees, a lark was mounting up to heaven, pouring out her clear morning-song. The air, moist with dew, bathed the head of Villefort, and refreshed his memory. "To-day," he said with an effort,—"to-day the man who holds the knife of justice must strike wherever there is guilt." Involuntarily his eyes wandered towards the window of Noirtier's room, where he had seen him the preceding night. The curtain

was drawn; and yet the image of his father was so vivid to his mind that he addressed the closed window as though it had been open, and as if through the opening he still beheld the threatening old man. "Yes," he murmured,—"yes, be satisfied."

His head dropped upon his chest, and in this position he paced his study; then he threw himself, dressed as he was, upon a sofa, less to sleep than to rest his limbs, cramped with fatigue and the chill of labour, which penetrates even to the marrow of the bones. By degrees every one woke; Villefort, from his study, heard the successive noises which constitute the life of a house,—the opening and shutting of doors, the ringing of Madame de Villefort's bell to summon the waiting-maid, mingled with the first shouts of the child, who rose joyous, as is customary with children. Villefort also rang; his new *valet de chambre* brought him the papers, and with them a cup of chocolate.

"What are you bringing me?" said he.

"A cup of chocolate."

"I did not ask for it. Who has paid me this attention?"

"My mistress, monsieur. She said you would have to speak a great deal on the case of the murder, and that you should take something to keep up your strength;" and the valet placed the cup on the table nearest to the sofa, and which was, like all the rest, covered with papers. He then left the room.

Villefort looked at the cup for an instant with a gloomy expression, then, suddenly taking it up with a nervous motion, he swallowed its contents at one draught. Any one would have said that he hoped the beverage would be mortal, and that he sought for death to deliver him from a duty which he would rather die than fulfil. He then rose and paced his room with a smile it would have been terrible to witness. The chocolate was inoffensive, and M. de Villefort suffered no bad results from drinking it. The breakfast-hour arrived, but M. de Villefort was not at table. The *valet de chambre* re-entered.

"Madame de Villefort wishes to remind you, monsieur," he said, "that eleven o'clock has just struck, and that the trial begins at twelve."

"Well!" said Villefort, "what then?"

"Madame de Villefort is dressed; she is quite ready, and wishes to know if she is to accompany you, monsieur?"

"Where does she mean?"

"To the Palais."

"What for?"

"Madame says that she wishes much to be present at the trial."

"Ah!" said Villefort, with a startling accent; "she wishes that?"

The servant drew back and said, "If you wish to go alone, monsieur, I will go and tell madame."

Villefort remained silent for a moment and dented his pale cheeks with his nails. "Say to madame," at length he answered, "that I wish to speak to her, and that I beg she will wait for me in her own room."

"Yes, monsieur."

"Then come to dress and shave me."

"Directly, monsieur."

The *valet de chambre* disappeared and almost instantly re-appeared, and having shaved his master, assisted him to dress in solemn black. When he had finished, he said, "Madame said she should expect monsieur as soon as he had finished dressing."

"I am going to her." And Villefort, with his papers under his arm and hat in hand, directed his steps towards the apartment of his wife. At the door he paused for a moment to wipe his damp, pale brow. He then entered the room. Madame de Villefort was sitting on an ottoman, and impatiently turning over the leaves of some newspapers and pamphlets which young Edouard, by way of amusing himself, was tearing to pieces before his mother could finish reading them. She was dressed to go out; her bonnet was placed beside her on a chair, and her gloves were on her hands.

"Ah! here you are, monsieur," she said in her naturally calm voice; "but how pale you are! Have you been working all night? Why did you not come down to breakfast? Well, will you take me, or shall I take Edouard?"

Madame de Villefort had multiplied her questions in order to gain one answer, but to all her inquiries M. de Villefort remained mute and cold as a statue.

"Edouard!" said Villefort, fixing an imperious glance on the child, "go and play in the drawing-room, my dear; I wish to speak to your mamma."

Madame de Villefort shuddered at the sight of that cold countenance, that resolute tone, and the strange preliminaries. Edouard raised his head, looked at his mother, and then, finding that she did not confirm the order, began cutting off the heads of his leaden soldiers.

"Edouard!" cried M. de Villefort, so harshly that the child jumped, "do you hear me? Go!" The boy, unaccustomed

to such treatment, rose, and turned pale,—it would be difficult to say whether with anger or with fear. His father went to him, took him by the arm, and kissed his forehead. "Go," he said; "go, my child."

Edouard ran out. M. de Villefort went to the door, which he closed behind the child, and bolted.

"Oh, Heaven!" said the young woman, endeavouring to read her husband's inmost thoughts, while a smile passed over her countenance which hardened to ice the impassive soul of Villefort. "What is the matter?"

"Madame, where do you keep the poison you generally use?" said the magistrate, without any introduction, placing himself between his wife and the door.

Madame de Villefort experienced the sensation which the lark must experience on seeing the kite contracting overhead the circles of its murderous flight. A hoarse broken tone, which was neither a cry nor a sigh, escaped her, and she became deadly pale. "Monsieur," she said, "I—I do not understand you." And as in her first paroxysm of terror, she had raised herself from the sofa, in the next, stronger very likely than the other, she fell down again on the cushions.

"I asked you," continued Villefort, in a perfectly calm tone, "where you conceal the poison by the aid of which you have killed my father-in-law, M. de Saint-Méran, my mother-in-law, Madame de Saint-Méran, Barrois, and my daughter Valentine?"

"Ah, monsieur," exclaimed Madame de Villefort, clasping her hands, "what are you saying?"

"It is not for you to interrogate, but to answer."

"Is it to the husband or to the judge?" stammered Madame de Villefort.

"To the judge; to the judge, madame!"

It was terrible to behold the frightful pallor of that woman, the agony of her expression, the trembling of her whole frame. "Ah, monsieur!" she muttered,—"ah, monsieur!" and this was all.

"You do not answer, madame!" exclaimed the terrible interrogator. Then he added with a smile even more threatening than his anger, "It is true, then; you do not deny it!" She made a movement. "And you cannot deny it!" added Villefort, extending his hand towards her, as though to seize her in the name of justice. "You have accomplished these different crimes with shameless skill, but which could deceive only those whose affection for you blinded them. Since the death of Madame de Saint-Méran I have known that a poisoner

lived in my house. M. d'Avrigny warned me of it. After the death of Barrois (God forgive me!) my suspicions were directed towards an angel!—my suspicions, which even when there is no crime are always alive in my heart. But since the death of Valentine, all uncertainty has been removed from my mind, madame, and not only from mine, but from those of others. Thus your crime, known by two persons, suspected by many, will soon become public; and as I told you just now, you no longer speak to the husband, but to the judge."

The young woman hid her face in her hands. "Oh, monsieur!" she stammered, "I beseech you, do not believe appearances."

"Are you, then, a coward?" cried Villefort, in a contemptuous voice. "But I have always remarked that poisoners were cowards. Can you be a coward,—you, who have had the courage to witness the death of two old men and a young girl murdered by you?"

"Monsieur! monsieur!"

"Can you be a coward?" continued Villefort, with increasing excitement,—"you, who could count, one by one, the minutes of four death-agonies; you, who have arranged your infernal plans and concocted your beverages with so wonderful skill and success? Have you, then, who have calculated everything with such nicety, have you forgotten to calculate one thing,—where the revelation of your crimes will lead you? Oh, it is impossible! you must have reserved some surer, more subtle and deadly poison than any other, that you might escape the punishment awaiting you. You have done this; I hope so at least."

Madame de Villefort wrung her hands, and fell on her knees.

"I understand," he said,—"you confess; but a confession made to the judges, a confession made at the last moment, extorted when the crime cannot be denied, does not diminish the punishment inflicted on the guilty!"

"The punishment!" exclaimed Madame de Villefort,—"the punishment, monsieur! Twice you have pronounced that word!"

"Certainly. Did you hope to escape it because you were four times guilty? Did you think the punishment would be withheld because you are the wife of him who demands it? No, madame, no! the scaffold awaits the poisoner, whoever she may be, unless, as I just said, the poisoner has taken the precaution of keeping for herself a few drops of her deadliest poison."

Madame de Villefort uttered a wild cry, and a hideous and uncontrollable terror spread over her distorted features.

"Oh! do not fear the scaffold, madame," said the magistrate; "I will not dishonour you, since that would be dishonour to myself. No! if you have understood me, you will understand that you are not to die on the scaffold."

"No! I do not understand; what do you mean?" stammered the unhappy woman, completely overwhelmed.

"I mean that the wife of the first magistrate in the capital shall not by her infamy soil an unblemished name; that she shall not with one blow dishonour her husband and her child."

"No, no! oh, no!"

"Well, madame, it will be a laudable action on your part; and I thank you for it!"

"You thank me! and for what?"

"For what you have just said."

"What did I say? Oh, my brain whirls! I no longer understand anything! My God! my God!" And she rose with her hair dishevelled and her lips foaming.

"You have answered, madame, the question I put to you on entering the room, 'Where do you keep the poison you generally use, madame?'"

Madame de Villefort raised her arms to heaven, and convulsively struck one hand against the other. "No, no!" she vociferated,—"no, you cannot wish that!"

"What I do not wish, madame, is that you should perish on the scaffold. Do you understand?" asked Villefort.

"Oh, mercy, mercy, monsieur!"

"What I require is that justice be done. I am on the earth to punish, madame," he added with a flaming glance. "Any other woman, were it the queen herself, I would send to the executioner; but to you I shall be merciful. To you I say, Have you not, madame, reserved some drops of the surest, deadliest, most speedy poison?"

"Oh, pardon me, monsieur! let me live!"

"She is cowardly," said Villefort.

"Reflect that I am your wife!"

"You are a poisoner."

"In the name of Heaven!"

"No!"

"In the name of the love you once bore me!"

"No, no!"

"In the name of our child! Ah, for the sake of our child, let me live!"

"No! no! no! I tell you; one day, if I allow you to live, you will perhaps kill him, as you have the others!"

"I!—I kill my boy!" cried the distracted mother, rushing towards Villefort; "I kill my Edouard! Ha! ha! ha!" and a frightful, demoniac laugh finished the sentence, which was lost in a hoarse rattle.

Madame de Villefort had fallen at her husband's feet. He approached her. "Keep this in mind, madame," he said; "if on my return, justice has not been satisfied, I will denounce you with my own mouth, and arrest you with my own hands!"

She listened, panting, overwhelmed, crushed; her eyes alone remained alive, and they showed the terrible flame that consumed her.

"Do you understand me?" said Villefort. "I am going down there to demand the sentence of death against a murderer. If I find you alive on my return, you shall sleep to-night in the Conciergerie."

Madame de Villefort sighed; her nerves gave way, and she sank on the carpet. The *procureur du roi* seemed to experience a sensation of pity; he looked upon her less severely, and bowing to her, said slowly, "Farewell, madame! farewell!"

That farewell struck Madame de Villefort like the executioner's knife. She fainted. The *procureur du roi* went out, after having double-locked the door.

CHAPTER CX

THE ASSIZES

The Benedetto affair, as it was called in the Palais, and by people in general, had produced a tremendous sensation. A frequenter of the Café de Paris, the Boulevard de Gand, and the Bois de Boulogne during his brief career of splendour, the false Cavalcanti had formed a host of acquaintances. The papers had related his various adventures, both as the man of fashion and the galley-slave; and as every one who had been personally acquainted with the Prince Cavalcanti felt a lively curiosity in his fate, they all determined to spare no trouble in endeavouring to witness the trial of M. Benedetto for the murder of his comrade. In the eyes of many, Benedetto appeared, if not a victim to, at least an instance of the fallibility of the law. M. Cavalcanti, his father, had been seen in Paris; and it was expected

that he would reappear to claim the illustrious outcast. Many also, who knew nothing of the famous *polonaise* in which he had made his first appearance at the Count of Monte Cristo's house, had been much impressed by the dignified manners, the gentlemanly bearing, and the knowledge of the world displayed by the old patrician, who certainly played the nobleman very well so long as he said nothing, and made no arithmetical calculations. As for the accused himself, many remembered him as being so amiable, so handsome, and so liberal, that they chose to think him the victim of some conspiracy, since in this world large fortunes frequently excite the malevolence and jealousy of some unknown enemy. Every one, therefore, hastened to the court,—some to witness the sight, others to comment upon it. From seven o'clock in the morning a crowd was stationed at the iron gates, and an hour before the trial began, the hall was already filled with those who had gained the privilege of admission. Before the entrance of the magistrates, and indeed frequently afterwards, a court of justice, on days when some especial trial is to take place, resembles a drawing-room, where many persons recognise one another, and converse, if they can do so without losing their seats, and when they are separated by too great a number of lawyers, spectators, and gendarmes, communicate by signs.

It was one of those magnificent autumn days which make amends for a short summer; the clouds which M. de Villefort had perceived at sunrise had all disappeared as if by magic, and one of the softest and most brilliant days of September shone forth in all its splendour.

Beauchamp, one of the kings of the press, and therefore having his throne everywhere, was looking round on every side. He perceived Château-Renaud and Debray, who had just gained the good graces of a *sergent de ville*, and who had persuaded the latter to place himself behind them, instead of before them, as he had a right to do. The worthy agent had recognised the minister's secretary and the millionaire, and by way of paying extra attention to his noble neighbours, promised to keep their places while they paid a visit to Beauchamp.

"Well!" said Beauchamp, "we shall see our friend!"

"Yes, indeed!" replied Debray. "That worthy prince! Deuce take those Italian princes!"

"A man, too, who could boast of Dante for a genealogist, and could reckon as far back as the *Divina Commedia*."

"A nobility of the rope!" said Château-Renaud, phlegmatically.

"He will be condemned, will he not?" asked Debray of Beauchamp.

"My dear fellow, I think we should ask you that question; you know such news much better than we do. Did you see the president at the minister's last night?"

"Yes."

"What did he say?"

"Something which will surprise you."

"Oh, make haste and tell me, then! it is a long time since that has happened."

"Well! he told me that Benedetto, who is considered a serpent of subtlety and a giant of cunning, is really but a very subordinate, silly rascal, and altogether unworthy of the experiments that will be made on his phrenological organs after his death."

"Bah!" said Beauchamp, "he played the prince very well."

"Yes, for you, who detest those unhappy princes, Beauchamp, and are always delighted to find fault with them; but not for me, who discover a gentleman by instinct, and who scent out an aristocratic family like a very bloodhound of heraldry."

"Then you never believed in the principality?"

"Yes! in the principality, but not in the prince."

"Not so bad," said Debray; "still, I assure you, he passed very well with many people; I have met him at the ministers' houses."

"Ah, yes!" said Château-Renaud. "The idea of thinking ministers understand anything about princes!"

"That is a good thing which you have just said, Château-Renaud," said Beauchamp, laughing.

"But," said Debray to Beauchamp, "if I spoke to the president, you have probably spoken to the *procureur du roi*."

"It was an impossibility; for the last week M. de Villefort has secluded himself,—naturally enough; this strange chain of domestic afflictions, followed by the strange death of his daughter—"

"Strange! What do you mean, Beauchamp?"

"Oh, yes! Do you pretend that all this has been unobserved at the minister's?" said Beauchamp, placing his eye-glass in his eye, where he tried to make it remain.

"My dear monsieur," said Château-Renaud, "allow me to tell you that you do not understand that manœuvre with the eye-glass half so well as Debray. Give him a lesson, Debray."

"Stay," said Beauchamp; "surely I am not deceived."

"What is it?"

"It is she!"

"She? who?"

"They said she had left."

"Mademoiselle Eugénie?" said Château-Renaud; "has she returned?"

"No; but her mother."

"Madame Danglars? Nonsense! Impossible!" said Château-Renaud; "only ten days after the flight of her daughter, and three days from the bankruptcy of her husband?"

Debray coloured slightly, and followed with his eyes the direction of Beauchamp's glance. "Come," he said, "it is only a veiled lady, some foreign princess,—perhaps the mother of Cavalcanti. But you were just speaking on a very interesting topic, Beauchamp."

"I?"

"Yes; you were telling us about the extraordinary death of Valentine."

"Ah, yes, so I was. But how is it that Madame de Villefort is not here?"

"Poor dear woman!" said Debray, "she is no doubt occupied in distilling balm for the hospitals, or in making cosmetics for herself or friends. Do you know she spends two or three thousand crowns a year in this amusement? But I wonder she is not here. I should have been pleased to see her, for I like her very much."

"And I detest her," said Château-Renaud.

"Why?"

"I do not know. Why do we love? Why do we hate? I detest her by antipathy."

"Or rather, by instinct."

"Perhaps so. But to return to what you were saying, Beauchamp."

"Well!" replied Beauchamp, "are you not curious to know, gentlemen, why they die so fast in the Villefort house?"

"'Fast' [*dru*] is good," said Château-Renaud.

"My dear fellow, you will find the word in Saint-Simon."

"But the thing itself is found in M. de Villefort's house; let us, then, return to it."

"Faith!" said Debray, "I confess that I have not lost sight of that house, which for the last three months has been hung with black; and day before yesterday madame was speaking to me about it in connection with Valentine."

"Who is madame?" asked Château-Renaud.

"The minister's wife, of course!"

"Oh, your pardon! I never visit ministers; I leave that to the princes."

"Really, you were before only sparkling, but now you are brilliant, baron; take compassion on us, or you will burn us, like another Jupiter."

"I will not speak again!" said Château-Renaud; "pray have compassion upon me, and do not take up every word I say."

"Come, let us endeavour to hear the end of your story, Beauchamp; I told you that day before yesterday madame made inquiries of me upon the subject. Enlighten me, and I will then communicate my information to her."

"Well, gentlemen, the reason people die so fast at M. de Villefort's is that there is an assassin in the house!"

The two young men shuddered, for the same idea had more than once occurred to them.

"And who is the assassin?" they asked together.

"Young Edouard!"

A burst of laughter from the auditors did not in the least disconcert the speaker, who continued, "Yes, gentlemen; Edouard, who is quite an adept in the art of killing."

"You are jesting."

"Not at all. I yesterday engaged a servant who had just left M. de Villefort. I intend sending him away to-morrow, he eats so enormously, to make up for the fast imposed upon him by his terror in that house. Well! listen to me."

"We are listening."

"It appears that the dear child has obtained possession of a bottle containing some drug, which he every now and then uses against those who have displeased him. First, Monsieur and Madame de Saint-Méran incurred his displeasure, so he poured out three drops of his elixir,—three drops were sufficient. Then it was the brave Barrois, Grandpa Noirtier's old servant, who sometimes rebuffed the dear child, as you know; the dear child poured out for him three drops of his elixir. Then it was poor Valentine's turn, who did not ill-treat him, but of whom he was jealous; he poured out for her three drops of his elixir, and for her as for the others that was the end."

"Why, what a devil of a story are you giving us?" said Château-Renaud.

"Yes," said Beauchamp; "a story of the other world, is it not?"

"It is absurd," said Debray.

"Ah!" said Beauchamp, "you doubt me? Well, you can

ask my servant, or rather him who to-morrow will no longer be my servant; it was the talk of the house."

"And this elixir, where is it? what is it?"

"The child conceals it."

"But where did he find it?"

"In his mother's laboratory."

"Does his mother, then, keep poisons in her laboratory?"

"How can I tell? You are questioning me like a *procureur du roi*. I only repeat what I have been told. I give you my authority; I can do no more. The poor wretch would eat nothing, from fear."

"It is incredible!"

"No, my dear fellow, it is not at all incredible! You saw last year that child of the Rue Richelieu, who amused himself with killing his brothers and sisters by driving a pin into one of their ears while they slept. The generation who follow us are very precocious!"

"Come, Beauchamp," said Château-Renaud, "I will bet that you do not believe a word of all you have been telling us! but I do not see the Count of Monte Cristo; why is he not here?"

"He is *blasé*," said Debray; "besides, he could not well appear in public, since he has been the dupe of the Cavalcanti, who, it appears, presented themselves to him with false letters of credit, and cheated him out of one hundred thousand livres, loaned on the principality."

"By the way, M. de Château-Renaud," asked Beauchamp, "how is Morrel?"

"Faith! I have called three times without once seeing him. Still, his sister did not seem uneasy, and told me that though she had not seen him for two or three days, she was sure he was well."

"Ah, now I think of it, the Count of Monte Cristo cannot appear in the hall!" said Beauchamp.

"Why not?"

"Because he is an actor in the drama."

"Has he assassinated any one, then?" asked Debray.

"No, it is he, on the contrary, whom they wished to assassinate. You know that it was in leaving his house that M. de Caderousse was murdered by his friend Benedetto; you know that the famous waistcoat was found in his house, containing the letter which stopped the signature of the marriage-contract. Do you see the waistcoat? There it is, all blood-stained, on the desk, as a part of the evidence."

"Ah, very good!"

"Hush, gentlemen! here is the court; let us go back to our places."

A noise was heard in the hall; the *sergent de ville* called his two *protégés* with an energetic "Hem!" and the bailiff appearing, called out with that shrill voice peculiar to his order, even in the days of Beaumarchais, "The court, gentlemen!"

CHAPTER CXI

THE INDICTMENT

THE judges took their places in the midst of the most profound silence; the jury took their seats; M. de Villefort, the object of unusual attention, and we had almost said of general admiration, sat in the armchair, and cast a tranquil glance around him. Every one looked with astonishment on that grave and severe face, the calm expression of which personal griefs had been unable to disturb; and the aspect of a man who was a stranger to all human emotions excited a kind of terror.

"Gendarmes!" said the president, "bring in the accused."

At these words the public attention became more intense, and all eyes were turned towards the door through which Benedetto was to enter. The door soon opened, and the accused appeared. The same impression was experienced by all present; and no one was deceived as to the expression of his countenance. His features bore no sign of that deep emotion which stops the beating of the heart and blanches the cheek. His hands, gracefully placed, one upon his hat, the other in the opening of his white waistcoat, were not at all tremulous; his eye was calm, and even brilliant. Having entered the court-room, he searched with inquiring eyes the body of magistrates and assistants, allowing his gaze to rest on the president, and especially on the *procureur du roi*. By the side of Andrea was placed the lawyer who was to conduct his defence, and who had been appointed by the court; for Andrea disdained to pay any attention to those details, to which he appeared to attach no importance. The lawyer was a young man with light hair, whose face expressed a hundred times more emotion than was exhibited by the prisoner.

The president called for the reading of the indictment, drawn up, as we know, by the clever and implacable pen of Villefort. During that reading, which occupied considerable time, the public attention was continually drawn towards Andrea, who

bore the burden with Spartan unconcern. Villefort had never been so concise nor so eloquent. The crime was presented under the liveliest colours; the former life of the prisoner, his transformation, his consistent criminality from an early age, were set forth with all the talent that a knowledge of human life could furnish to a mind like that of the *procureur du roi.* By force of that preliminary alone Benedetto was for ever lost in public opinion before the sentence of the law could be pronounced. Andrea paid no attention to the successive charges which were brought against him. M. de Villefort, who examined him attentively, and who no doubt practised upon him all the psychological studies he was accustomed to use, in vain endeavoured to make him lower his eyes, notwithstanding the depth and fixedness of his gaze. At length the reading was completed.

"Accused," said the president, "your name and surname?"

Andrea rose. "Excuse me, Monsieur the President," he said in a clear voice, "but I see that you are adopting an order in your questioning in which I shall be unable to follow you. I claim—and will presently justify my claim—to be in an exceptional situation. I beg therefore that you will grant me permission to follow a different order in my replies; I will none the less answer all questions."

The astonished president looked at the jury, who themselves looked at the *procureur du roi.* The whole assembly manifested great surprise; but Andrea appeared quite unmoved.

"Your age?" said the president. "Will you answer that question?"

"I will answer that question as well as the rest, Monsieur the President, but in its turn."

"Your age?" repeated the president.

"I am twenty-one years old; or rather, I shall be in a few days, as I was born the night of September 27, 1817."

M. de Villefort, who was busy taking down some notes, raised his head at the mention of this date.

"Where were you born?" continued the president.

"At Auteuil, near Paris."

M. de Villefort a second time raised his head, looked at Benedetto as if he had been gazing at the head of Medusa, and became livid. As for Benedetto, he gracefully wiped his lips with a fine cambric pocket-handkerchief.

"Your profession?"

"First I was a forger," answered Andrea, calmly; "then I became a thief; and lately I have become an assassin."

A murmur, or rather a storm of indignation burst from all parts of the assembly. The judges themselves appeared stupefied; and the jury manifested tokens of disgust for a cynicism so unexpected from a fashionable man. M. de Villefort pressed his hand upon his brow, which, at first pale, had become red and burning. Then he suddenly rose, and looked around as though he had lost his senses; he wanted air.

"Are you looking for anything, M. le Procureur du roi?" asked Benedetto, with his most affable smile. M. de Villefort made no reply, but sat, or rather threw himself down again upon his chair.

"And now, prisoner, will you consent to tell your name?" said the president. "The brutal affectation with which you have enumerated your crimes, the pride with which you profess them,—which calls for a severe reprimand on the part of the court, both in the name of morality, and for the respect due to humanity,—constitutes perhaps your reason for delay in announcing your name; you wished to make your name a climax to the titles which you have already assumed."

"It is quite wonderful, Monsieur the President, how correctly you have read my thoughts," said Benedetto, in his softest voice and most polite manner. "This is indeed the reason why I begged you to invert the order of the questions."

The public astonishment had reached its height. There was no longer any deceit or bravado in the manner of the accused. The excited audience awaited the thunder that must come from the depths of that dark cloud.

"Well!" said the president; "your name?"

"I cannot tell you my name, since I do not know it; but I know my father's, and can give it to you."

A painful dazzling blinded Villefort. Drops of bitter sweat might be seen dropping from his cheeks upon the papers which he moved about with hands trembling convulsively.

"State, then, your father's name," said the president.

Not a whisper, not a breath was heard in that vast assembly; every one waited in suspense.

"My father is the *procureur du roi*," replied Andrea, calmly.

"The *procureur du roi?*" said the president, stupefied, and without noticing the agitation which spread over the face of M. de Villefort; "*the procureur du roi?*"

"Yes; and if you wish to know his name, I will tell it,—he is named Villefort."

The explosion, which had been so long restrained, from a feeling of respect to the court of justice, now burst forth like

thunder from the breasts of all present; the court itself did not seek to restrain the movement of the multitude. The exclamations, the insults addressed to Benedetto, who remained unmoved, the energetic gestures, the movement of the gendarmes, the sneers of the scum of the crowd—always sure to rise to the surface in case of any disturbance—all this lasted five minutes, before the magistrates and the bailiffs were able to restore silence. In the midst of this tumult the voice of the president was heard to exclaim,—

"Are you playing with justice, accused, and do you dare place before your fellow-citizens an example of corruption, which, in a period lacking nothing on that score, has not yet had its parallel?"

Several persons hurried up to M. de Villefort, who was nearly buried in his chair, offering him consolation, encouragement, and protestations of zeal and sympathy. Order was re-established in the court-room, except at one place where a group still showed movement and agitation. A lady, it was said, had just fainted; they had supplied her with a smelling-bottle, and she had recovered.

During all that tumult, Andrea had turned his smiling face towards the assembly; then, leaning with one hand on the oaken rail of his bench, in a graceful attitude, he said, "Gentlemen, God forbid that I should seek to insult the court or make a useless disturbance in the presence of this honourable assembly. They ask my age; I tell it. They ask where I was born; I answer. They ask my name; I cannot give it, since my parents abandoned me. But though I cannot give my own name, not possessing one, I can tell them my father's. Now I repeat, my father is named M. de Villefort, and I am ready to prove it."

There was an energy, a conviction, and a sincerity in the manner of the young man which silenced the tumult. All eyes were turned for a moment towards the *procureur du roi*, who sat as motionless as though a thunderbolt had changed him into a corpse.

"Gentlemen!" said Andrea, commanding silence by his voice and manner, "I owe you the proofs and explanations of what I have said."

"But," said the president, irritated, "in your examination you called yourself Benedetto, declared yourself an orphan, and claimed Corsica as your country."

"I said anything I pleased, in order that the solemn declaration I have just made should not be withheld, which otherwise would certainly have been the case. I now repeat that I was

born at Auteuil on the night of September 27, 1817, and that I am the son of the *procureur du roi*, M. de Villefort. Do you wish for any further details? I will give them. I was born in No. 28 Rue de la Fontaine, in a room hung with red damask. My father took me in his arms, telling my mother I was dead, wrapped me in a napkin marked with an H and an N, and carried me into a garden, where he buried me alive."

A shudder ran through the assembly when they saw that the confidence of the prisoner increased in proportion with the terror of M. de Villefort.

"But how have you become acquainted with all these details?" asked the president.

"I will tell you, Monsieur the President. A man who had sworn vengeance against my father, and had long watched his opportunity to kill him, had introduced himself that night into the garden in which my father buried me. He was concealed in a thicket; he saw my father bury something in the ground, and stabbed him in the midst of the operation; then, thinking the deposit might contain some treasure, he turned up the ground and found me still living. The man carried me to the hospital for foundlings, where I was inscribed under the number 57. Three months afterwards his sister travelled from Rogliano to Paris, and having claimed me as her son, carried me away. Thus, you see, though born in Paris, I was brought up in Corsica."

There was a moment's silence, during which one could have fancied the hall empty, so profound was the stillness.

"Proceed!" said the president.

"Certainly," continued Benedetto, "I might have lived happily with those good people, who adored me; but my perverse disposition prevailed over the virtues which my adopted mother endeavoured to instil into my heart. I increased in wickedness till I committed crime. One day when I cursed Providence for making me so wicked, and ordaining me to such a fate, my adopted father said to me, 'Do not blaspheme, unhappy child! for not in anger did God give you life. The crime is your father's, not yours,—your father's, who doomed you to hell if you should die, and to wretchedness if by some miracle you should be restored to life.' After that I ceased cursing God, and cursed my father. This is why I have uttered the words for which you blame me; this is why I have filled this whole assembly with horror. If it is an additional crime, punish me; but if I have convinced you that ever since the day of my birth my fate has been sad, bitter, and lamentable, then pity me."

"But your mother?" asked the president.

"My mother thought me dead; she is not guilty. I have not wished to know her name, nor do I know it."

Just then a piercing cry, ending in a sob, burst from the centre of the group which surrounded the lady who had before fainted, and who now fell into a violent fit of hysterics. As she was carried out of the hall, the thick veil which concealed her face dropped off, and Madame Danglars was recognised. Notwithstanding his shattered nerves, the stunning sensation in his ears, and the madness which turned his brain, Villefort recognised her and stood up.

"The proofs! the proofs!" said the president; "remember that this tissue of horrors must be supported by the clearest proofs."

"The proofs?" said Benedetto, laughing; "do you want proofs?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, look at M. de Villefort, and then ask me for proofs."

Every one turned towards the *procureur du roi*, who, unable to bear the universal gaze now riveted on him alone, advanced, staggering, into the midst of the tribunal, with his hair dishevelled, and his face indented with the marks of his nails. The whole assembly uttered a long murmur of astonishment.

"Father!" said Benedetto, "I am asked for proofs; do you wish me to give them?"

"No, no," stammered M. de Villefort, in a hoarse voice; "no, it is useless!"

"How useless?" cried the president. "What do you mean?"

"I mean that I feel it impossible to struggle against this deadly weight which crushes me, gentlemen. I am—I perceive it—in the hands of an avenging God! There is no need of proofs; all that this young man has said is true."

A dull, gloomy silence, like that which precedes some awful phenomenon of nature, pervaded the assembly, who shuddered in dismay.

"What! M. de Villefort," cried the president, "are you not yielding to an hallucination? What! are you in possession of your senses? It is easily seen that an accusation so strange, so unexpected, so terrible, has disordered your mind. Come, recover yourself."

The *procureur du roi* dropped his head; his teeth chattered

like those of a man under a violent attack of fever, and yet he was deadly pale.

"I am in possession of all my senses, monsieur," he said; "my body alone suffers, as you may suppose. I acknowledge myself guilty of all the young man has brought against me, and from this hour hold myself at the disposal of the *procureur du roi* who will succeed me."

And as he spoke these words with a hoarse, choking voice, he staggered towards the door, which was mechanically opened by an officer of the court. The whole assembly were dumb with astonishment at the revelation and confession which made so terrible a culmination of the series of events which for the last fortnight had agitated Parisian society.

"Well," said Beauchamp, "let them now say that drama is unnatural!"

"Faith!" said Château-Renaud, "I would rather end my career like M. de Morcerf; a pistol-shot seems quite delightful compared with this catastrophe."

"And so he has committed murder," said Beauchamp.

"And I thought of marrying his daughter!" said Debray. "She did well to die, poor girl!"

"The sitting is adjourned, gentlemen," said the president; "and the case is postponed to the next session. The matter will be examined anew, and will be committed to another magistrate."

As for Andrea, still self-possessed and more interesting than ever, he left the hall escorted by gendarmes, who involuntarily paid him some deference.

"Well, what do you think of this, my fine fellow?" asked Debray of the *sergent de ville*, slipping a louis into his hand.

"There will be extenuating circumstances," he replied.

CHAPTER CXII

EXPIATION

NOTWITHSTANDING the density of the crowd, M. de Villefort saw it open before him. There is something so awe-inspiring in great afflictions that even in the worst periods of history, the first emotion of a crowd has generally been to sympathise with the sufferer in a great catastrophe. Many people have been assassinated in a tumult; but criminals have rarely been insulted during their trial. Thus Villefort passed through the mass of spectators and officers of the Palais, and withdrew.

Though he had acknowledged his guilt, he was protected by his grief. There are some situations which men understand by instinct, though their reason cannot explain them; in such cases the greatest orator is he who expresses himself most vehemently and naturally. The multitude takes his expressions for a complete narration; it has reason to be satisfied with them, and greater reason to consider them sublime when they are true. It would be difficult to describe the state of stupor in which Villefort left the Palais. Every pulse beat with feverish excitement, every nerve was strained, every vein swollen, and every part of his body seemed to suffer differently from the rest, thus multiplying his agony a thousandfold. Habit alone guided him through the passage; he threw aside his magisterial robe,—not for propriety's sake, but because it was an oppressive burden on his shoulders, a shirt of Nessus, prolific in torture. Having staggered as far as the Rue Dauphiné, he perceived his carriage, awoke his sleeping coachman by opening the door himself, threw himself on the cushions, and pointed towards the Faubourg St. Honoré; the carriage drove on. All the weight of his fallen fortune seemed to fall upon his head. That weight crushed him. He did not see the consequences; he had not measured them; he felt them. He could not reason out his course like a cool murderer, who deals with what is familiar to him. A thought of God was in the depths of his soul,—"God!" he murmured, without knowing what he said; "God! God!" He saw only God in all that had happened. The carriage rolled rapidly. Villefort, while turning restlessly on the cushions, felt something press against him. He put out his hand to remove the object; it was a fan which Madame de Villefort had left in the carriage. This fan awakened a recollection which darted through his mind like lightning in darkness,—he thought of his wife.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, as though a red-hot iron were piercing his heart. During the last hour his own wretchedness had alone been presented to his mind; now another object, not less terrible, suddenly presented itself. His wife! he had acted the inexorable judge with her, he had condemned her to death; and she, crushed by remorse, struck with terror, covered with the shame inspired by the eloquence of his irreproachable virtue; she, a poor weak woman, without defence against a power absolute and supreme,—she might at that very moment perhaps be preparing to die! An hour had already elapsed since her condemnation. At that moment, doubtless, she was recalling all her crimes to her memory; she was asking pardon for her

sins; perhaps she was even writing a letter imploring on her knees forgiveness from her virtuous husband,—a forgiveness she was purchasing with her death! Villefort again groaned with anguish and despair. "Ah!" he exclaimed, "that woman became criminal only from associating with me! I carried the infection of crime with me, and she has caught it as she would the typhus fever, the cholera, the plague! And yet I have punished her! I have dared to say to her, 'Repent and die!' Oh, no! no! she shall live; she shall follow me. We will fly, leave France behind, and go to the ends of the earth. I talked to her of the scaffold! Great God! how did I dare utter the word! Why, the scaffold awaits me also! Yes, we will fly; I will confess all to her; I will tell her daily that I also have committed a crime! Oh, what an alliance of the tiger and the serpent! Oh, worthy wife of a husband such as I! She must live, that my infamy may diminish hers." And Villefort dashed open the window in front of the carriage. "Faster! faster!" he cried in a tone which electrified the coachman. The horses, impelled by fear, flew towards the house.

"Yes, yes," repeated Villefort, as he approached his home; "yes, that woman must live; she must repent, and educate my son, my poor child, the sole survivor, with the exception of the indestructible old man, of the wreck of my house. She loves him; it was for his sake she has committed these crimes. The heart of a mother who loves her child is not irredeemably bad; she will repent. No one will know she has been guilty; the crimes which have taken place in my house, though they now occupy the public mind, will be forgotten in time, or if, indeed, a few enemies should remember them, why, I will add them to my list of crimes. What will it signify if one, two, or three more are added? My wife and child shall escape from this gulf, carrying treasures with them; she will live and may yet be happy, since her child, in whom all her love is centred, will be with her. I shall have performed a good action, and my heart will be lighter." And the *procureur du roi* breathed more freely than he had done for some time.

The carriage stopped at the door of the hotel. Villefort leaped out of the carriage and saw that his servants were surprised at his early return; he could read no other expression on their features. None of them spoke to him; they merely stood aside as usual to let him pass. As he went by M. Noirtier's room, he perceived through the half-open door two figures; but he had no curiosity to know who was visiting his father,—his anxiety carried him on farther.

"Come," he said, as he ascended the stairs leading to his wife's room, "nothing is changed here." He then closed the door of the landing. "No one must disturb us," he said; "I must speak freely to her, accuse myself, and say—" He approached the door, touched the crystal handle, which yielded to his hand. "Not locked!" he murmured; "that is well." And he entered the little room in which Edouard slept; for though the child went to school during the day, his mother could not allow him to be separated from her at night. He searched the room with a glance. "Not here," he said; "doubtless she is in her bedroom." He rushed towards the door; it was bolted. He stopped, shuddering. "Héloïse!" he cried. He fancied he heard the moving of a piece of furniture. "Héloïse!" he repeated.

"Who is there?" answered the voice of her he sought. He thought that voice more feeble than usual.

"Open the door!" cried Villefort; "open, it is I."

But notwithstanding this request, notwithstanding the tone of anguish in which it was uttered, the door remained closed. Villefort burst it open with a violent blow. At the entrance of the room which led to her boudoir, Madame de Villefort was standing erect, pale, her features contracted, and her eyes glaring horribly. "Héloïse! Héloïse!" he said, "what is the matter? Speak!"

The young woman extended towards him her hand stiff and pale. "It is done, monsieur!" she said, with a rattling which seemed to tear her throat. "What more do you want?" and she fell on the floor.

Villefort ran to her and seized her hand, which convulsively clasped a crystal bottle with a golden stopper. Madame de Villefort was dead. Villefort, maddened with horror, stepped back to the threshold of the door, fixing his eyes on the corpse. "My son!" he exclaimed suddenly; "where is my son? Edouard, Edouard!" and he rushed out of the room, still crying, "Edouard! Edouard!" The name was pronounced in such a tone of anguish that the servants ran up.

"Where is my son?" asked Villefort; "let him be removed from the house that he may not see—"

"M. Edouard is not downstairs, monsieur," replied the *valet de chambre*.

"Then he must be playing in the garden; go and see."

"No, monsieur; madame sent for him half an hour ago; he went into her room, and has not been downstairs since."

A cold perspiration burst out on Villefort's brow; his legs

trembled, and his brain was filled with a confused maze of ideas. "In Madame de Villefort's room?" he murmured, and slowly returned, with one hand wiping his forehead, and with the other supporting himself against the wall. To enter the room, he must again see the body of his unhappy wife. To call Edouard he must reawaken the echo of that room changed to a sepulchre. To speak seemed like violating the silence of the tomb. Villefort felt that his tongue was paralysed in his throat. "Edouard!" he stammered; "Edouard!" The child did not answer. Where then could he be, if he had entered his mother's room and not since returned? He stepped forward. The corpse of Madame de Villefort was stretched across the doorway leading to the room in which Edouard must be; that corpse seemed to watch over the threshold, with eyes fixed and open, with a frightful, mysterious irony on the lips. Through the open door a portion of the boudoir was visible, containing an upright piano, and a blue satin couch. Villefort stepped forward two or three paces, and beheld his child lying—no doubt asleep—on the sofa. The unhappy man uttered an exclamation of joy; a ray of light seemed to penetrate the abyss of despair and darkness. He had only to step over the corpse, enter the boudoir, take the child in his arms, and flee with him far, far away.

Villefort was no longer the man whose refined corruption made him the type of civilisation; he was a tiger wounded to death, whose teeth were broken in his last agony. He no longer feared realities, but phantoms. He leaped over the corpse as though it had been a furnace. He took the child in his arms, pressed him, shook him, called him; but the child made no reply. He pressed his eager lips to the cheeks; they were icy cold and pale. He felt his stiffened limbs; he pressed his hand upon the heart, but it no longer beat; the child was dead. A folded paper fell from Edouard's breast. Villefort, thunderstruck, fell upon his knees; the child dropped from his arms, and rolled on the floor by the side of its mother. Villefort picked up the paper, and, recognising his wife's writing, ran his eyes rapidly over its contents. They were as follows:—

"You know that I was a good mother, since it was for my son's sake that I became criminal. A good mother cannot depart without her son."

Villefort could not believe his eyes; he could not believe his reason. He dragged himself towards the child's corpse, and examined it as a lioness contemplates its dead cub. Then a

piercing cry escaped from his breast. "God!" he said; "always God!" The two victims alarmed him; he could not bear the solitude filled by two corpses. Until then he had been sustained by rage, by his strength of mind, by despair, by the supreme agony which led the Titans to scale the heavens, and Ajax to defy the gods. He now rose, his head bent beneath the weight of grief; and shaking his hair moist with perspiration on end with terror, he, who had never felt compassion for any one, determined to seek his father, that he might have some one to whom he could relate his misfortunes, some one by whose side he might weep. He descended the little stairs with which we are acquainted, and entered Noirtier's room. The old man appeared to be listening attentively and as affectionately as his infirmities would allow to the Abbé Busoni, who looked cold and calm, as usual. Villefort, perceiving the abbé, passed his hand across his brow. He recollected the call he had made upon him after the dinner at Auteuil, and then the visit the abbé had himself paid to his house on the day of Valentine's death. "You here, monsieur?" he exclaimed; "do you then never appear but to act as an escort to Death?"

Busoni turned round, and perceiving the excitement depicted on the magistrate's face, the savage lustre of his eyes, he understood that the scene of the assizes had been accomplished; but beyond this he was ignorant. "I came to pray over the body of your daughter," he replied.

"And why are you here to-day?"

"I come to tell you that you have sufficiently repaid your debt, and that from this moment I will pray to God to forgive you as I do."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Villefort, stepping back fearfully, "surely that is not the voice of the Abbé Busoni!"

"No!" the abbé threw off his false tonsure, shook his head, and his hair, no longer confined, fell in black masses around his manly face.

"It is the face of the Count of Monte Cristo!" exclaimed the *procureur du roi*, with a haggard expression.

"You are not exactly right, M. le Procureur du roi; you must go farther back."

"That voice! that voice! where did I first hear it?"

"You heard it for the first time at Marseilles, twenty-three years ago, on the day of your marriage with Mademoiselle de Saint-Méran. Refer to your papers."

"You are not Busoni? you are not Monte Cristo? Oh, heavens! you are that enemy, concealed, implacable, deadly!

I must have wronged you in some way at Marseilles. Oh, woe to me!"

"Yes; you are indeed right," said the count, crossing his arms over his broad chest, "search! search!"

"But what have I done to you?" exclaimed Villefort, whose mind was balancing between reason and insanity in that cloud which is neither a dream nor reality,—"what have I done to you? Tell me then! Speak!"

"You condemned me to a horrible, tedious death; you killed my father; you deprived me of liberty, of love, and of happiness."

"Who are you, then? Who are you?"

"I am the spectre of a wretch you buried in the dungeons of the Château d'If. To that spectre, issuing at length from his tomb, God has given the mask of Monte Cristo, and has covered him with diamonds and with gold, that you might not recognise him until to-day."

"Ah! I recognise you! I recognise you!" exclaimed the *procureur du roi;* "you are—"

"I am Edmond Dantès!"

"You are Edmond Dantès!" cried Villefort, seizing the count by the wrist, "then come here." And he dragged Monte Cristo up the stairs; who, ignorant of what had happened, followed him in astonishment, expecting some new catastrophe. "Hold, Edmond Dantès!" he said, pointing to the bodies of his wife and child. "See! are you well avenged?"

Monte Cristo became pale at this horrible sight; he felt that he had passed beyond the bounds of vengeance, and that he could no longer say, "God is for and with me." With an expression of indescribable grief he threw himself upon the body of the child, reopened his eyes, felt his pulse, and then rushed with him into Valentine's room, of which he double-locked the door.

"My child!" cried Villefort, "he carries away the body of my child! Oh, curses, woe, death to you!" and he tried to follow Monte Cristo; but as though in a dream, he was fixed to the spot. His eyes glared as though they were starting through the sockets; he griped the flesh on his chest until his nails were stained with blood; the veins of his temples swelled as though they would burst their narrow limits, and deluge his brain with fire. This lasted several minutes, until the frightful overturn of reason was accomplished; then, uttering a loud cry, followed by a burst of laughter, he rushed down the stairs.

A quarter of an hour later, the door of Valentine's room

opened, and Monte Cristo reappeared. Pale, with a dull eye and heavy heart, all the noble features of that face, usually so calm and serene, appeared overwhelmed with grief. In his arms he held the child, whom no skill had been able to recall to life. Bending on one knee, he placed it reverently by the side of its mother, with its head upon her breast. Then rising, he went out, and meeting a servant on the stairs, he asked, "Where is M. de Villefort?"

The servant, instead of answering, pointed to the garden. Monte Cristo ran down the steps, and advancing towards the spot designated, beheld Villefort surrounded by his servants with a spade in his hand, and digging the earth with fury. "It is not here!" he cried. "It is not here!" And then he moved farther on, and began to dig again.

Monte Cristo approached him, and said in a low voice, "Monsieur, you have indeed lost a son; but—"

Villefort interrupted him; he had neither heard nor understood. "Oh, I will find him!" he cried; "you may pretend he is not here, but I will find him, though I dig for ever!"

Monte Cristo drew back in terror. "Oh!" he said, "he is mad!" And as though he feared that the walls of the accursed house would crumble around him, he rushed into the street, for the first time doubting whether he had the right to do as he had done. "Oh! enough of this,—enough of this," he cried; "let me save the last." On entering his house, he met Morrel, who wandered about like a ghost. "Prepare yourself, Maximilian." the count said with a smile; "we leave Paris to-morrow."

"Have you nothing more to do here?" asked Morrel.

"No," replied Monte Cristo; "God grant I may not have done too much already!"

CHAPTER CXIII

THE DEPARTURE

The events which had taken place formed the theme of conversation throughout all Paris. Emmanuel and his wife spoke of them with natural astonishment in their little apartment in the Rue Meslay; they associated the three successive, sudden, and unexpected catastrophes of Morcerf, Danglars, and Villefort. Maximilian, who was paying them a visit, listened to their conversation, or rather was present at it, buried in his accustomed apathy.

"Indeed," said Julie, "might we not almost fancy, Emmanuel, that those people, so rich, so happy but yesterday, had forgotten in their prosperity that an evil genius hovered over them, and that he, like the wicked fairies in Perrault's stories who have not been invited to some wedding or baptism, has appeared all at once to revenge himself for their fatal neglect?"

"What a succession of disasters!" said Emmanuel, thinking of Morcerf and Danglars.

"What sufferings!" said Julie, thinking of Valentine, but with a delicacy natural to women, refraining from uttering that name in her brother's presence.

"If it is God who has afflicted them," said Emmanuel; "it is because God, who is supreme goodness, has found nothing in their past lives to claim a mitigation of their suffering; it is because they were accursed."

"Do you not form a very rash judgment, Emmanuel?" said Julie. "When my father with a pistol in his hand was once on the point of committing suicide, had any one then said, 'This man deserves his misery,' would not that person have been deceived?"

"Yes, but God did not permit our father to fall, as he did not permit Abraham to sacrifice his son. To the patriarch, as to us, he sent an angel who arrested the wings of Death."

Emmanuel had scarcely uttered these words when the sound of the bell was heard,—the well-known signal given by the porter that a visitor had arrived. Nearly at the same instant the door of the room was opened, and the Count of Monte Cristo appeared on the threshold. The young couple uttered a cry of joy; Maximilian raised his head, but let it fall again immediately.

"Maximilian," said the count, without appearing to notice the different impressions which his presence produced on the little circle, "I come to seek you."

"To seek me?" repeated Morrel, as if awakening from a dream.

"Yes," said Monte Cristo, "has it not been agreed that I should take you with me, and did I not tell you yesterday to prepare for departure?"

"I am ready," said Maximilian; "I came expressly to wish them farewell."

"Whither are you going, count?" asked Julie.

"In the first instance to Marseilles, madame."

"To Marseilles!" exclaimed the young couple.

"Yes, and I take your brother with me."

"Oh, count!" said Julie, "will you restore him to us cured of his melancholy?"

Morrel turned away to conceal the confusion of his countenance.

"You perceive, then, that he is not happy?" said the count.

"Yes," replied the young woman; "and I fear much that he finds our home but a dull one."

"I will undertake to divert him," replied the count.

"I am ready to accompany you, monsieur," said Maximilian. "Adieu, my kind friends! Emmanuel! Julie! Farewell!"

"How, farewell?" exclaimed Julie; "do you leave us thus so suddenly, without any preparations for your journey, without even a passport?"

"Needless delays but increase the grief of parting," said Monte Cristo; "and Maximilian has doubtless provided himself with everything requisite,—at least, I advised him to do so."

"I have a passport, and my clothes are ready packed," said Morrel, in his tranquil but mournful manner.

"Good!" said Monte Cristo, smiling; "in these prompt arrangements may be recognised the promptness of a well-disciplined soldier."

"And you leave us thus," said Julie, "at a moment's warning? you do not give us a day, not even an hour before your departure?"

"My carriage is at the door, madame, and I must be in Rome in five days."

"But does Maximilian go to Rome?" exclaimed Emmanuel.

"I am going wherever it may please the count to lead me," said Morrel, with a smile full of grief; "I belong to him for the next month."

"Oh, heavens! how strangely he expresses himself, count!" said Julie.

"Maximilian accompanies me," said the count, in his kindest and most persuasive manner; "therefore do not make yourself uneasy on your brother's account."

"Once more farewell, my dear sister; Emmanuel, adieu!" Morrel repeated.

"His carelessness and indifference touch me to the heart," said Julie. "Oh, Maximilian, Maximilian, you are certainly concealing something from us!"

"Pshaw!" said Monte Cristo, "you will see him return to you, gay, smiling, and joyful."

Maximilian cast a look of disdain, almost of anger, on the count.

"Let us set out," said Monte Cristo.

"Before you leave us, count," said Julie, "will you permit us to express to you all that the other day—"

"Madame," interrupted the count, taking her two hands in his, "all that you could say would never equal what I read in your eyes; the thoughts of your heart are fully understood by mine. Like benefactors in romances, I should have left you without seeing you again; but that would have been a virtue beyond my strength, because I am a weak and vain man, fond of the tender, kind, and thankful glances of my fellow-creatures. Now that I am going away, I carry my egotism so far as to say, 'Do not forget me, my friends, for probably you will never see me again.'"

"Never see you again!" exclaimed Emmanuel, while two large tears rolled down Julie's cheeks,—"never see you again! It is not a man, then, but some angel that leaves us; and this angel is on the point of returning to heaven after having appeared on earth to do good."

"Say not so," quickly returned Monte Cristo,—"say not so, my friends. Angels never err; celestial beings can stay their actions where they wish them to end. Fate is not more powerful than they; it is they, on the contrary, who overcome fate. No, Emmanuel, I am but a man, and your admiration is as unmerited as your words are sacrilegious." And pressing his lips on the hand of Julie, who rushed into his arms, he extended his hand to Emmanuel; then tearing himself from this house, the abode of peace and happiness, he made a sign to Maximilian, who followed him passively, with the indifference which was perceptible in him ever since the death of Valentine.

"Restore my brother to peace and happiness," whispered Julie to Monte Cristo. And the count pressed her hand in reply, as he had done eleven years before on the staircase leading to Morrel's study.

"You still confide, then, in Sinbad the Sailor?" asked he, smiling.

"Oh, yes!" was the ready answer.

"Well, then, sleep in peace, and put your trust in the Lord."

As we have before said, the post-chaise was waiting; four powerful horses were already pawing the ground with impatience, while at the foot of the steps, Ali, his face bathed in perspiration, and apparently just arrived from a long walk was standing.

"Well," asked the count in Arabic, "have you been to the old man's?"

Ali made a sign in the affirmative.

"And have you placed the letter before him, as I ordered you to do?"

The slave respectfully indicated that he had.

"And what did he say, or rather, what did he do?"

Ali placed himself in the light, so that his master might see him distinctly, and then imitating in his intelligent manner the countenance of the old man, he closed his eyes as Noirtier was in the custom of doing when saying "yes."

"Good! he accepts," said Monte Cristo. "Now let us go."

These words had scarcely escaped him when the carriage was on its way, and the feet of the horses struck a shower of sparks from the pavement. Maximilian settled himself in his corner without uttering a word. Half an hour had fled when the carriage stopped suddenly; the count had just pulled the silken check-string, which was fastened to Ali's finger. The Nubian immediately descended, and opened the carriage door. It was a lovely starlight night; they had reached the top of the hill Villejuif, the platform whence Paris, like some dark sea, is seen to agitate its millions of lights, resembling phosphoric waves,—waves indeed more noisy, more passionate, more changeable, more furious, more greedy than those of the tempestuous ocean; waves which never lie calm, like those of the vast sea; waves ever destructive, ever foaming, and ever restless. The count remained alone; and on a sign from his hand, the carriage advanced some steps. He contemplated for some time, with his arms crossed, the furnace in which are melted, turned, and shaped, all those ideas which, emerging from the boiling abyss, go forth to agitate the world. When he had fixed his piercing look on this modern Babylon, which equally engages the contemplation of the religious enthusiast, the materialist, and the scoffer, "Great city," murmured he, inclining his head and joining his hands as if in prayer, "less than six months have elapsed since first I entered thy gates. I believe that the Spirit of God led my steps to thee, and that he also enables me to quit thee in triumph. The secret cause of my presence within thy walls I have confided alone to him, who only has had the power to read my heart. God only knows that I retire from thee without pride or hatred, but not without many regrets; he only knows that the power confided to me has never been made subservient to my personal good or to any useless cause. Oh, great city! it is in thy palpitating bosom that I have found that which I sought; like a patient miner, I have dug deep into thy very entrails to root out evil thence. Now my work is accomplished,

my mission is terminated; now thou canst afford me neither pain nor pleasure. Adieu, Paris! adieu!"

His look wandered over the vast plain like that of some genius of the night; he passed his hand over his brow, and getting into the carriage, the door was closed on him, and it quickly disappeared on the other side of the hill in a cloud of dust and noise.

Two leagues were passed without a single word being pronounced. Morrel was dreaming, and Monte Cristo was looking at the dreamer.

"Morrel," said the count to him at length, "do you repent having followed me?"

"No, count; but to leave Paris—"

"If I thought happiness awaited you in Paris, Morrel, I would have left you there."

"Valentine reposes within the walls of Paris, and to leave Paris is like losing her a second time."

"Maximilian," said the count," the friends that we have lost do not repose in the bosom of the earth, but are buried deep in our hearts; and it has been thus ordained, that we may always be accompanied by them. I have two friends, who in this way never depart from me,—the one, he who gave me being, and the other, he who conferred knowledge and intelligence on me. Their spirits live in me. I consult them when doubtful, and if I ever do any good, it is to their good counsels that I am indebted. Listen to the voice of your heart, Morrel, and ask it whether you ought to continue showing me that melancholy countenance."

"My friend," said Maximilian, "the voice of my heart is very sorrowful, and promises me only misfortunes."

"It is ever thus that weakened minds see everything as through a black veil. The soul forms its own horizons; your soul is darkened, and consequently the sky of the future appears stormy and unpromising."

"Perhaps that is true," said Maximilian; and he subsided into his thoughtful mood.

The journey was performed with that marvellous rapidity which the unlimited power of the count ever commanded; towns fled from them like shadows on their path, and trees shaken by the first winds of autumn seemed like giants madly rushing on to meet them, and retreating as rapidly when once reached. The following morning they arrived at Châlons, where the count's steamboat waited for them; without an instant being lost, the carriage was placed on board, and the two travellers embarked. The boat was built for speed; her two paddle-wheels resembled wings with which she skimmed the water like a bird. Morrel

was not insensible to that sensation of delight which is generally experienced in passing rapidly through the air; and the wind, which occasionally raised the hair from his forehead, seemed for the moment to dispel the clouds collected there. As the distance increased between the travellers and Paris, an almost superhuman serenity appeared to surround the count; he might have been taken for an exile about to revisit his native land. Ere long Marseilles presented herself to view,—Marseilles, full of life and energy; Marseilles, the younger sister of Tyre and Carthage, that has succeeded to them in the empire of the Mediterranean; Marseilles, that with age increases in vigour and strength. Powerful memories were stirred within them by the sight of that round tower, that Fort St. Nicolas, that port with its quays of brick, where they had both gambolled as children; and it was with one accord that they stopped on the Canebière. A vessel was setting sail for Algiers, on board of which the bustle usually attending departure prevailed. The passengers and their relatives crowded on the deck; friends taking a tender, but sorrowful leave of one another, some weeping, others noisy in their grief, formed a spectacle, exciting even to those who witnessed similar ones daily, but which had not the power to disturb the current of thought that had taken possession of the mind of Maximilian from the moment he had set foot on the broad pavement of the quay.

"Here," said he, leaning heavily on the arm of Monte Cristo,—"here is the spot where my father stood when the *Pharaon* entered the port; it was here that the good old man whom you saved from death and dishonour threw himself into my arms. I yet feel his warm tears on my face; and his were not the only tears shed, for many who saw us wept also."

Monte Cristo gently smiled and said, "I was there," at the same time pointing to the corner of a street. As he spoke, and in the very direction he indicated, a groan, expressive of bitter grief, was heard; and a woman was seen waving her hand to a passenger on board the vessel about to sail. Monte Cristo looked at her with an emotion that must have been remarked by Morrel had not his eyes been fixed on the vessel.

"Oh, heavens!" exclaimed Morrel, "I am not mistaken! That young man who is waving his hat, that youth in uniform, is Albert de Morcerf!"

"Yes," said Monte Cristo, "I recognised him."

"How so? you were looking the other way."

The count smiled, as he was in the habit of doing when he did not want to make any reply, and he again directed his looks

towards the veiled female, who soon disappeared at the corner of the street. Turning to his friend, "Dear Maximilian," said the count, "have you nothing to do in this region?"

"I have to weep over the grave of my father," replied Morrel, in a broken voice.

"Well, then, go; wait for me there, and I will soon join you."

"You leave me, then?"

"Yes; I also have a filial visit to pay."

Morrel allowed his hand to fall into that which the count extended to him; then with an inexpressibly melancholy inclination of the head he left the count, and bent his steps towards the east of the city. Monte Cristo remained on the same spot until Maximilian was out of sight; he then walked slowly towards the Allées de Meillan to seek out a small house which the earlier part of this story has, without doubt, made familiar to our readers. It yet stood under the shade of the fine avenue of lime-trees, which forms one of the most frequent walks of the idlers of Marseilles, covered by an immense vine, which spreads its aged and blackened branches over the stone front, burned yellow by the ardent sun of the South. Two stone steps, worn away by the friction of the feet, led to the door, made of three planks, which, owing to their never having made acquaintance with paint or varnish, parted annually to reunite again when the damp season arrived. This house, with all its crumbling antiquity and apparent misery, was yet cheerful and picturesque. It was indeed the same that the elder Dantès formerly inhabited; but the old man occupied the garret, while the whole house was now placed at the command of Mercédès by the count.

The woman whom the count had seen leave the ship with so much regret entered this house; she had scarcely closed the door after her when Monte Cristo appeared at the corner of a street, so that he found and lost her again almost at the same instant. The worn-out steps were old acquaintances of his; he knew better than any one else how to open that weather-beaten door with a large-headed nail, which served to raise the latch within. He entered without knocking, or giving any other intimation of his presence, as an intimate friend, or as a landlord. At the end of a passage paved with bricks was seen a little garden, bathed in sunshine, and rich in warmth and light; it was in this garden that Mercédès found, in the place indicated by the count, the sum of money which he through a sense of delicacy intimated had been placed there four-and-twenty years previously. The trees of the garden were easily seen from the steps of the street door. Monte Cristo, on stepping into the

house, heard a sigh almost resembling a deep sob; he looked in the direction whence it came, and there under an arbour of Virginian jessamine, with its thick foliage and long purple flowers, he perceived Mercédès seated, with her head bowed, and weeping. She had raised her veil, and alone in the presence of Heaven, with her face hidden by her hands, was giving free scope to those sighs and tears which had been so long restrained by the presence of her son. Monte Cristo advanced a few paces; the gravel crackled under his feet. Mercédès raised her head, and uttered a cry of terror on beholding a man before her.

"Madame," said the count, "it is no longer in my power to restore you to happiness, but I offer you consolation; will you deign to accept it as coming from a friend?"

"I am indeed most wretched," replied Mercédès,—"alone in the world. I had but my son, and he has left me!"

"He possesses a noble heart, madame," replied the count, "and he has acted rightly. He feels that every man owes a tribute to his country; some contribute their talents, others their industry; those devote their blood, these their nightly labours, to the same cause. Had he remained with you, his life must have become a hateful burden, nor would he have participated in your griefs. He will increase in strength and honour by struggling with adversity, which he will convert into prosperity. Leave him to build up the future for you, and I venture to say you will confide it to safe hands."

"Oh!" replied the poor woman, mournfully shaking her head, "the prosperity of which you speak, and which, from the bottom of my heart, I pray God in his mercy to grant him, I can never enjoy. The bitter cup of adversity has been drained by me to the very dregs, and I feel that the grave is not far distant. You have acted kindly, count, in bringing me back to the place where I have been happy. It is where one has been happy that one ought to die."

"Alas!" said Monte Cristo, "your words sear and embitter my heart, the more so because you have every reason to hate me,—I have been the cause of all your misfortunes. But why do you not pity, instead of blaming me? You would render me still more unhappy—"

"Hate you, blame you,—you, Edmond? Hate, reproach the man that has spared my son's life! For was it not your fatal and sanguinary intention to destroy that son of whom M. de Morcerf was so proud? Oh, look at me well, and discover, if you can, even the semblance of a reproach in me."

The count looked up and fixed his eyes on Mercédès, who,

partly rising from her seat, extended both her hands towards him.

"Oh, look at me!" she continued with a feeling of profound melancholy; "my eyes no longer dazzle by their brilliancy, for the time has long fled since I came to smile on Edmond Dantès, who awaited me up there at the window of the garret where his aged father lived. Years of grief have created an abyss between those days and the present. Accuse you, Edmond! hate you, my friend! No, it is myself that I blame, myself that I hate! Oh, miserable creature that I am!" cried she, clasping her hands, and raising her eyes to heaven. "How have I been punished! I once possessed piety, innocence, and love,—the three elements in the happiness of angels,—and, wretch that I am, I have come to doubt God!"

Monte Cristo approached her, and silently took her hand.

"No," said she, withdrawing it gently,—"no, my friend, touch me not. You have spared me, yet of all those who have fallen under your vengeance I was the most guilty. They were influenced by hatred, by avarice, and by self-love; but I was base, and for want of courage, acted against my judgment. Nay, do not press my hand, Edmond; you are thinking of some affectionate word,—I perceive it,—but do not say it. Keep it for another; I am no longer worthy of it. See" (and she exposed her face completely to view),—"see, misfortune has silvered my hair; my eyes have shed so many tears that they are encircled by a ring of purple; and my brow is wrinkled. You, Edmond, on the contrary, you are still young, handsome, dignified; it is because you have never doubted the mercy of God, and he has supported and strengthened you in all your trials."

As Mercédès spoke, the tears chased one another down her cheeks; the unhappy woman's heart was breaking, as memory recalled the changeful events of her life. Monte Cristo took her hand and kissed it respectfully; but she herself felt that it was a kiss without warmth, like that which he would have bestowed on the hand of some marble statue of a saint. "There are fated lives," she continued, "in which one first fault ruins all the future. I believed you dead; why did I survive you? What good has it done me to mourn for you eternally in the secret recesses of my heart? Only to make a woman of nine-and-thirty look like one fifty years of age. Why, having recognised you, and I the only one to do so,—why was I able to save my son alone? Ought I not also to have rescued the man whom I had accepted for a husband, guilty though he was?

Yet I let him die! What do I say? Oh, merciful heavens! was I not accessory to his death by my supine insensibility, by my contempt for him, not remembering, or not willing to remember, that it was for my sake he had become a traitor and a perjurer? In what am I benefited by accompanying my son so far, since I now abandon him, and allow him to depart alone to the baneful climate of Africa? Oh, I have been base, cowardly, I tell you! I have abjured my affections, and like all renegades, I bring misfortune to those who surround me!"

"No, Mercédès," said Monte Cristo, "no; you judge yourself with too much severity. You are a noble-minded woman, and it was your grief that disarmed me. Still, I was but an agent, led on by an invisible and offended Deity, who chose not to withhold the fatal blow that I had launched. I take that God to witness, at whose feet I have prostrated myself daily for the last ten years, that I would have sacrificed my life to you, and with my life the projects that were indissolubly linked with it. But—and I say it with some pride, Mercédès—God required me, and I lived. Examine the past and the present, and endeavour to dive into futurity, and then say whether I am not a divine instrument. The most dreadful misfortunes, the most frightful sufferings, the abandonment of all those who loved me, the persecution of those who did not know me, formed the trials of my youth; then suddenly, from captivity, solitude, misery, I was restored to light and liberty, and became the possessor of a fortune so brilliant, so unbounded, so unheard of, that I must have been blind not to be conscious that God had endowed me with it to work out his own great designs. From that time this fortune seemed to me a sacred trust. From that time I had no longer any thought for that life of which you, poor woman, once shared the sweetness. Not an hour of peace,—not one. I felt myself driven on like a cloud of fire passing across the sky to burn doomed cities. Like those adventurous captains about to embark on some enterprise full of danger, I laid in my provisions, I loaded my arms, I collected every means of attack and defence; I inured my body to the most violent exercises, my soul to the bitterest trials; I taught my arm to slay, my eyes to behold excruciating sufferings, and my mouth to smile at the most horrid spectacles. Good-natured, confiding, and forgiving as I was, I became revengeful, cunning, and wicked,—or rather, immovable as fate. Then I launched out into the path that was opened to me. I overcame every obstacle, and reached the goal; but woe to those who met me in my career!"

"Enough!" said Mercédès, "enough, Edmond! Believe me, that she who alone recognised you has been the only one to comprehend you; and had she crossed your path, and you had crushed her like a frail glass, still, Edmond, still she must have admired you! Like the gulf between me and the past, there is an abyss between you, Edmond, and the rest of mankind; and I tell you freely that the comparison I draw between you and other men will ever be one of my greatest tortures. No, there is nothing in the world to resemble you in worth and goodness; Now bid me farewell, Edmond, and let us part."

"Before I leave you, Mercédès, have you no request to make?" said the count.

"I desire but one thing in this world, Edmond,—the happiness of my son."

"Pray the Lord to spare his life, and I will take upon myself to promote his happiness."

"Thanks, thanks, Edmond!"

"But have you no request to make for yourself, Mercédès?"

"For myself I want nothing. I live, as it were, between two graves. The one is that of Edmond Dantès, lost to me long, long since. I loved him. That word ill becomes my faded lip, but it is a memory dear to my heart, and one that I would not lose for all that the world contains. The other grave is that of the man who met his death from the hand of Edmond Dantès. I approve of the deed, but I must pray for the dead."

"Your son shall be happy, madame," repeated the count.

"Then I shall be as happy as I am still able to be."

"But what are your intentions?"

"To say that I shall live here, like the Mercédès of other times, gaining my bread by labour, would not be true, nor would you believe me. I have no longer the strength to do anything but to spend my days in prayer. However, I shall have no occasion to work, for the little sum of money buried by you, and which I found in the place you mentioned, will be sufficient to maintain me. Rumour will probably be busy respecting me, my occupations, my manner of living; that will signify but little."

"Mercédès," said the count, "I do not say it to blame you; but you made an unnecessary sacrifice in relinquishing the whole of the fortune amassed by M. de Morcerf. Half of it, at least, by right belonged to you, in virtue of your vigilance and economy."

"I perceive what you are intending to propose to me; but I cannot accept it, Edmond. My son would not permit it."

"Nothing shall be done without the full approbation of Albert de Morcerf. I will make myself acquainted with his intentions, and will submit to them. But if he be willing to accept my offers, will you oppose them?"

"You well know, Edmond, that I am no longer a reasoning creature; I have no will, unless it be the will never to decide. I have been so overwhelmed by the many storms that have broken over my head, that I am become passive in the hands of the Almighty, like a sparrow in the talons of an eagle. I live because it is not ordained for me to die. If succour be sent to me, I will accept it."

"Ah, madame," said Monte Cristo, "it is not thus that we worship God. God designs that we should comprehend and dispute his purposes; it is for this that he has given us freedom of the will."

"Oh!" cried Mercédès, "do not say that to me! Shall I believe that God gave me freedom of will, and that it rested with me only to save myself from despair?"

Monte Cristo dropped his head and shrank from the vehemence of her grief. "Will you not say *au revoir*?" he asked, offering his hand.

"Certainly, I say to you *au revoir*," said Mercédès, pointing to heaven with solemnity. "I say it to you to show you that I still hope." And after pressing her own trembling hand upon that of the count, Mercédès rushed up the stairs and disappeared.

Monte Cristo slowly left the house and turned towards the quay. But Mercédès did not observe his departure, though she was seated at the little window of the room which had been occupied by old Dantès. Her eyes were straining to see the ship which was carrying her son over the vast sea, but still her voice involuntarily murmured softly, "Edmond! Edmond! Edmond!"

CHAPTER CXIV

THE PAST

THE count departed with a sad heart from the house in which he had left Mercédès, probably never to see her again. Since the death of little Edouard, a great change had taken place in Monte Cristo. Having reached the summit of his vengeance by a long and tortuous path, he saw on the other side of the elevation the abyss of doubt. More than this, the conversation which had just taken place between Mercédès and himself had

awakened so many recollections in his heart that he felt it necessary to combat with them. A man of the count's temperament could not long indulge in that melancholy which, indeed, may stimulate common minds, imparting to them a certain originality, but is injurious to minds of a higher cast. He thought that since he was now almost blaming himself, he must have made an error in his calculations.

"I cannot so have deceived myself," he said; "I am looking upon the past in a false light. What!" he continued, "can I have been tracing a false path in the last ten years? Can the end which I proposed be a mistaken one? Has one hour sufficed to prove to an architect that the work upon which he founded all his hopes was sacrilegious, if not impossible? I cannot reconcile myself to this idea; it would madden me. The reason why I am now dissatisfied is that I have not a clear appreciation of the past. The past, like the country through which we walk, becomes indistinct as we advance. My position is like that of a person wounded in a dream; he feels the wound, though he cannot recollect when he received it. Come, then, thou regenerate man, thou extravagant prodigal, thou awakened sleeper, thou all-powerful visionary, thou invincible millionaire! once again review thy past life of starvation and wretchedness; revisit the scenes where fate has driven, or misfortune has led, or despair has received thee. Too many diamonds, too much gold and splendour are now reflected by the mirror in which Monte Cristo seeks to behold Dantès. Hide thy diamonds, bury thy gold, shroud thy splendour, exchange riches for poverty, liberty for a prison, a living body for a corpse!"

As he thus meditated, Monte Cristo walked down the Rue de la Caisserie. It was the same through which, twenty-four years before, he had been conducted in the night by a silent guard; the houses, to-day so smiling and animated, were on that night dark, silent, and closed. "And yet they were the same," murmured Monte Cristo, "only now it is broad daylight instead of night; it is the sun which brightens the place, and makes it appear so cheerful."

He proceeded towards the quay by the Rue St. Laurent, and advanced to the Consigne; it was the point where he had embarked. A pleasure-boat was passing, with its striped awning; Monte Cristo called the owner, who immediately rowed up to him with the eagerness of a boatman hoping for a good fare.

The weather was magnificent, and the excursion was enjoyable. The sun, red and flaming, was sinking into the water,

which engulfed it on its approach. The sea, smooth as crystal, was now and then disturbed by the leaping of fish, which, pursued by some unseen enemy, sought for safety in another element; while, on the extreme verge of the horizon, might be seen, white and graceful as the seagull, the fishermen's boats returning to Martigues, or the merchant-vessels bound for Corsica or Spain.

But notwithstanding that serene sky, those graceful boats, and the golden light in which the whole scene was bathed, the Count of Monte Cristo, wrapped in his cloak, could think only of that terrible voyage, the details of which were, one by one, recalled to his memory. The solitary light burning at the Catalans; that first sight of the Château d'If, which told him whither they were leading him; the struggle with the gendarmes when he wished to throw himself overboard; his despair when he found himself vanquished, and the cold sensation of the end of the carbine touching his forehead,—all these were brought before him in vivid and frightful reality. Like those streams which the heat of the summer has dried up, and which, after the autumnal storms, gradually accumulate moisture and running water, so did the count feel his heart gradually fill with the bitterness which formerly nearly overwhelmed that of Edmond Dantès. He no longer beheld the clear sky, the graceful barks, the glowing light; the sky appeared hung in black, and the gigantic structure of the Château d'If seemed like the phantom of a mortal enemy. As they reached the shore, the count instinctively recoiled to the extreme end of the boat, and the owner was obliged to say in tones of urgent persuasion, "Monsieur, we have reached the shore."

Monte Cristo remembered that on that very spot, on the same rock, he had been violently dragged by the guards, and that he had been forced to ascend that slope by pricks of a bayonet. The journey had seemed very long to Dantès; but Monte Cristo had found it very short. Each stroke of the oar awakened a thousand thoughts and remembrances, which sprang up with the froth of the sea.

There had been no prisoners confined in the Château d'If since the revolution of July; it was inhabited only by a guard placed for the prevention of smuggling. A guide waited at the door to exhibit to visitors this monument of curiosity, once a scene of terror. But although the count was acquainted with these facts, when he entered under the arch of the doorway, when he descended the dark staircase, when he was led to the dungeons, which he had asked to be shown him, a cold pallor

came to his brow, from which the icy perspiration was driven back to his heart. He inquired whether any of the ancient jailers were still there; but they had all been pensioned, or had passed on to some other employment. The guide who conducted him had been there only since 1830. He visited his own dungeon. He again beheld the dull light vainly endeavouring to penetrate the narrow opening. His eyes rested upon the spot where his bed, since then removed, had stood; and behind the bed the new stones indicated where the breach made by the Abbé Faria had been. Monte Cristo felt his limbs tremble; he seated himself upon a log of wood.

"Are there any stories connected with this prison besides the one relating to the poisoning of Mirabeau?" asked the count. "Are there any traditions respecting these dismal abodes, in which it is difficult to believe men can ever have imprisoned their fellow-creatures?"

"Yes, monsieur; indeed the jailer Antoine told me one connected with this very dungeon."

Monte Cristo shuddered; Antoine had been his jailer. He had almost forgotten his name and face, but on hearing his name, he recalled his person,—his face encircled by a beard, his brown jacket, and his bunch of keys, the jingling of which he again seemed to hear. The count turned round, and fancied he saw him in the corridor, which was rendered still darker by the torch carried by the guide.

"Would you like to hear the story, monsieur?"

"Yes, relate it," said Monte Cristo, pressing his hand to his heart to still its violent beatings; he felt afraid of hearing his own history.

"This dungeon," said the guide, "was, it appears, some time ago occupied by a very dangerous prisoner,—the more dangerous because full of enterprise. Another person was confined in the château at the same time; but he was not wicked, he was only a poor mad priest."

"Ah, indeed! mad!" repeated Monte Cristo; "and what was his mania?"

"He offered millions to any one who would set him at liberty."

Monte Cristo raised his eyes, but he could not see the heavens; there was a stone veil between him and the firmament. He thought that there had been a veil no less thick before the eyes of those to whom Faria offered the treasures. "Could the prisoners see each other?" he asked.

"Oh, no, monsieur, it was expressly forbidden; but they

eluded the vigilance of the guards, and made a passage from one dungeon to the other."

"And which of them made this passage?"

"Oh, it must have been the young man, certainly,—for he was strong and industrious, while the abbé was aged and weak; besides, his mind was too vacillating to allow him to carry out an idea."

"Blind fools!" murmured the count.

"However, be that as it may, the young man made a passage, —how, or by what means, no one knows; but he made it, and there is the trace yet remaining as a proof. Do you see it?" and the man held the torch to the wall.

"Ah, yes, to be sure," said the count, in a voice hoarse from emotion.

"The result was that the two men communicated together; how long they did so, nobody knows. One day the old man fell ill and died. Now guess what the young man did."

"Tell me."

"He carried off the corpse, which he placed in his own bed, with its face to the wall; then he entered the empty dungeon, closed the entrance, and slid himself into the sack which had contained the dead body. Did you ever hear of such an idea?"

Monte Cristo closed his eyes, and seemed again to experience all the sensations he had felt when the coarse canvas, yet moist with the cold dews of death, had touched his face. The jailer continued:—

"Now this was his project: he thought that they buried the dead at the Château d'If, and imagining that they would not expend much labour on the grave of a prisoner, he calculated on raising the earth with his shoulders. But, unfortunately, their arrangements at the château frustrated his projects. They never buried their dead; they merely attached a heavy cannon-ball to the feet, and then threw them into the sea. This is what was done: The young man was thrown from the top of the rock; the corpse was found on the bed next day, and the whole truth was discovered, for the men who performed the office then mentioned what they had not dared to speak of before,—that at the moment the corpse was thrown into the deep, they heard a shriek, which was immediately stifled by the water in which the body disappeared."

The count breathed with difficulty; the cold drops ran down his forehead, and his heart was full of anguish. "No," he muttered,—"the doubt I felt was but the commencement of forgetfulness; but here the wound reopens, and the heart again

thirsts for vengeance. And the prisoner," he continued aloud, "was he ever heard of afterwards?"

"Oh, no; of course not. You can understand that one of two things must have happened,—he must either have fallen flat, in which case the blow, from a height of fifty feet, would have killed him instantly; or he must have fallen upright, and then the weight would have dragged him to the bottom, where he remained, poor fellow!"

"Then you pity him?" said the count.

"Of course I do; although he was in his own element."

"What do you mean?"

"A report ran that he was a naval officer, who had been confined for plotting with the Bonapartists."

"Truth!" muttered the count, "thou art made to rise above the waves and flames! Thus the poor sailor lives in the recollection of those who narrate his history; his terrible story is recited in the chimney-corner, and a shudder is felt at the description of his transit through the air to be swallowed by the deep." Then the count added aloud, "Was his name ever known?"

"Oh, yes; but only as No. 34."

"Oh, Villefort, Villefort!" murmured the count, "my ghost often must have reminded thee of this when it haunted thy sleepless hours!"

"Do you wish to see anything more, monsieur?" said the guide.

"Yes; especially if you will show me the poor abbé's room."

"Ah! No. 27."

"Yes; No. 27," repeated the count, who seemed to hear the voice of the abbé answering him in those very words through the wall when asked his name.

"Come, monsieur."

"Wait," said Monte Cristo, "I wish to take one final glance around this room."

"That happens well," said the guide; "I have forgotten the other key."

"Go and get it."

"I will leave you the torch, monsieur."

"No, take it away; I can see in the dark."

"Why, you are like No. 34. They said he was so accustomed to darkness that he could see a pin in the darkest corner of his dungeon."

"He needed fourteen years to arrive at that," muttered the count.

The guide carried away the torch. The count had spoken correctly. After a few seconds he saw everything as distinctly as by daylight. Then he looked around him, and then he fully recognised his dungeon.

"Yes," he said, "there is the stone upon which I used to sit; there is the impression made by my shoulders on the wall; there is the mark of my blood made when I one day dashed my head against the wall. Oh, those figures! how well I remember them! I made them one day to calculate the age of my father, that I might know whether I should find him still living, and that of Mercédès, to know if I should find her still free. After finishing that calculation I had a minute's hope. I did not reckon upon hunger and infidelity!" and a bitter laugh escaped from the count. He saw in fancy the burial of his father and the marriage of Mercédès. On the other side of the dungeon he perceived an inscription, the white letters of which were still visible on the green wall. "O God," he read, "preserve my memory!" "Oh, yes!" he cried, "that was my only prayer at last; I no longer begged for liberty, but memory. I dreaded to become mad and forgetful. O God, thou hast preserved my memory! I thank thee! I thank thee!"

At this moment the light of the torch was reflected on the wall; the guide was advancing; Monte Cristo went to meet him.

"Follow me, monsieur," said the guide, and without ascending the stairs, he conducted the count by a subterranean passage to another entrance. There again Monte Cristo was assailed by a crowd of thoughts. The first thing that met his eye was the meridian, drawn by the abbé on the wall, by which he calculated the time; then he saw the remains of the bed on which the poor prisoner had died. The sight of this, instead of exciting the grief experienced by the count in the dungeon, filled his heart with a soft and grateful sentiment, and tears fell from his eyes.

"This is where the mad abbé was kept, monsieur, and that is where the young man entered;" and the guide pointed to the opening, which had remained unclosed. "From the appearance of the stone," he continued, "a learned gentleman discovered that the prisoners might have communicated together for ten years. Poor fellows! they must have been ten weary years."

Dantès took some louis from his pocket, and gave them to the man who had twice pitied him without knowing him. The guide took them, thinking them merely a few pieces of little value; but the light of the torch revealed their true worth.

"Monsieur," he said, "you have made a mistake; you have given me gold."

"I know it."

The guide looked upon the count with surprise. "Monsieur," he cried, scarcely able to believe his good fortune, "I cannot understand your generosity!"

"Oh, it is very simple, my good fellow; I have been a sailor, and your story touched me more than it would others."

"Then, monsieur, since you are so liberal, I ought to offer you something."

"What have you to offer me, my friend? Shells? Straw-work? Thank you!"

"No, monsieur, neither of those,—something connected with this story."

"Really!" cried the count, eagerly, "what is it?"

"Listen," said the guide; "I said to myself, 'Something is always left in a cell inhabited by one prisoner for fifteen years;' so I began to sound the wall."

"Ah!" cried Monte Cristo, remembering the two hiding-places of the abbé.

"After some search, I discovered that it sounded hollow at the head of the bed, and under the hearth."

"Yes," said the count, "yes."

"I raised the stones, and found—"

"A rope-ladder and some tools?"

"How do you know that?" asked the guide, in astonishment.

"I do not know, I only guess it, because things like those are generally found in prisoners' cells."

"Yes, monsieur, a rope-ladder and tools."

"And have you them yet?"

"No, monsieur, I sold them to visitors, who considered them great curiosities; but I still have something left."

"What is it?" asked the count, impatiently.

"A sort of book, written upon strips of cloth."

"Go and get it, my good fellow; and if it be what I hope, rest satisfied."

"I will run for it, monsieur;" and the guide went out.

Then the count knelt by the side of the bed which death had changed for him to an altar. "Oh, my second father!" he exclaimed, "thou who hast given me liberty, knowledge, riches; thou who, like beings of a superior order, had the knowledge of good and evil,—if in the depths of the tomb there still remains something within us which can respond to the voice of those who are left on earth; if after death the soul ever revisits

the places where we have lived and suffered,—then, noble heart! sublime soul! then, I conjure thee, by the paternal love thou didst bear me, by the filial obedience I vowed to thee, grant me some sign, some revelation! Remove from me the remains of a doubt, which, if it be not changed to satisfaction, will become remorse?" The count bowed his head and clasped his hands together.

"Here, monsieur," said a voice behind him.

Monte Cristo shuddered and rose. The guide held out the strips of cloth upon which the Abbé Faria had spread all the treasures of his knowledge. The manuscript was the great work by the Abbé Faria upon royalty in Italy. The count seized it hastily, and his eyes immediately fell upon the epigraph; he read, "Thou shalt tear out the dragons' teeth, and shalt trample the lions under foot, saith the Lord."

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "here is my answer. Thanks, father, thanks!" And feeling in his pocket, he took thence a small pocket-book, which contained ten bank-notes, each of one thousand livres. "Here," he said, "take this pocket-book."

"Do you give it to me?"

"Yes; but only on condition that you will not open it till I am gone;" and placing in his breast the treasure he had just found, which was more valuable to him than the richest jewel, he rushed out of the passage, and reaching his boat, cried, "To Marseilles!" Then, as he departed, he fixed his eyes upon the gloomy prison. "Woe," he cried, "to those who confined me in that wretched prison! and woe to those who forgot that I was there!"

As he repassed the Catalans, the count turned round, and burying his head in his cloak, murmured the name of a woman. The victory was complete; twice he had overcome his doubts. The name he pronounced, in a voice of tenderness amounting almost to love, was that of Haydée.

On landing, the count turned towards the cemetery, where he felt sure of finding Morrel. He too, ten years ago, had piously sought out a tomb, and sought it vainly. He, who returned to France with millions, had been unable to find the grave of his father, who had perished from hunger. Morrel had indeed placed a cross over the spot, but it had fallen down, and the grave-digger had burned it, as he did all the old wood in the churchyard. The worthy merchant had been more fortunate. Dying in the arms of his children, he had been by them laid by the side of his wife, who had preceded him to eternity by two years. Two large slabs of marble, on which were inscribed

their names, were placed on either side of a little enclosure, railed in, and shaded by four cypress-trees. Morrel was leaning against one of these, mechanically fixing his eyes on the graves. His grief was so profound that he was nearly unconscious.

"Maximilian," said the count, "you should not look on the graves, but there;" and he pointed upwards.

"The dead are everywhere," said Morrel; "did you not yourself tell me so as we left Paris?"

"Maximilian," said the count, "you asked me during the journey to allow you to remain some days at Marseilles. Do you still wish to do so?"

"I have no wishes, count; only I fancy I could pass the time less painfully here than anywhere else."

"So much the better, for I must leave you; but I take your promise with me, do I not?"

"Ah, count, I shall forget it."

"No, you will not forget it, because you are a man of honour, Morrel; because you have sworn, and are about to do so again."

"Oh, count, have pity upon me! I am so unhappy."

"I have known a man much more unfortunate than you, Morrel."

"Impossible!"

"Alas!" said Monte Cristo, "that is one of the proud conceits of our poor humanity; every one thinks himself more wretched than another unfortunate who weeps and groans at his side."

"Who can be more wretched than the man who has lost all he loved and desired in the world?"

"Listen, Morrel, and pay attention to what I am about to tell you. I knew a man who, like you, had fixed all his hopes of happiness upon a woman. He was young; he had an old father whom he loved, a betrothed bride whom he adored. He was about to marry her, when one of those caprices of fate which would almost make us doubt the goodness of God, if God did not afterwards manifest himself by showing that everything is, in his views, a means conducting to his infinite unity,—one of those caprices deprived him of his mistress, of the future of which he had dreamed (for in his blindness he forgot that he could only read the present), and buried him in a dungeon."

"Ah!" said Morrel, "one leaves a dungeon in a week, a month, or a year."

"He remained there fourteen years, Morrel," said the count, placing his hand on the young man's shoulder.

Maximilian shuddered. "Fourteen years?" he muttered.

"Fourteen years!" repeated the count. "During that time

he had many moments of despair. He also, Morrel, like you, considered himself the unhappiest of men, and wished to kill himself."

"Well?" asked Morrel.

"Well! at the height of his despair God revealed himself through a human instrument,—for God no longer performs miracles. At first, perhaps, he did not recognise in that the infinite mercy of the Lord,—for eyes veiled by tears do not at once become clear-sighted; but at last he took patience and waited. One day he left the prison in a wonderful manner,—transformed, rich, powerful. His first cry was for his father; but that father was dead."

"My father too is dead," said Morrel.

"Yes; but your father died in your arms, happy, respected, rich, and full of years. His father died poor, despairing, doubting God; and when his son sought his grave ten years afterwards, his tomb had disappeared, and no one could say, 'There sleeps the father you so well loved!'"

"Oh!" exclaimed Morrel.

"He was then a more unhappy son than you, Morrel, for he could not even find his father's grave!"

"But there remained to him at least the woman he loved."

"You are wrong, Morrel; that woman—"

"She was dead?"

"Worse than that,—she was faithless, and had married one of the persecutors of her betrothed. You see, then, Morrel, that he was a more unhappy lover than you."

"And has he found consolation?"

"He has found calmness, at least."

"And does he ever expect to be happy?"

"He hopes to, Maximilian."

The young man's head fell on his breast. "You have my promise," he said, after a minute's pause, extending his hand to Monte Cristo. "Only remember—"

"On the 5th of October, Morrel, I shall expect you at the island of Monte Cristo. On the 4th a yacht will wait for you in the port of Bastia; it will be called the *Eurus*. You will give your name to the captain, who will bring you to me. It is understood, is it not?"

"I understand, count, and will do as you say; but do you remember that the 5th of October—"

"Child!" replied the count, "not to know the value of a man's word! I have told you twenty times that if you wish to die on that day, I will assist you. Morrel, farewell!"

"Do you leave me?"

"Yes; I have business in Italy. I leave you alone, to struggle alone with unhappiness,—alone with that eagle with mighty wings which the Lord sends to his elect to bring them to his feet. The story of Ganymede is not a fable, Maximilian; it is an allegory."

"When do you leave?"

"Immediately; the steamer waits, and in an hour I shall be far from you. Will you accompany me to the harbour, Maximilian?"

"I am entirely at your service, count."

Morrel accompanied the count to the harbour. The white steam was ascending like a plume of feathers from the black chimney. The steamer soon departed, and in an hour afterwards, as the count had said, was scarcely distinguishable in the horizon amid the earlier fogs of the night.

CHAPTER CXV

PEPPINO

At the same time that the steamer disappeared behind Cape Morgion, a man, travelling post on the road from Florence to Rome, had just passed the little town of Aquapendente. He was travelling fast enough to make a great deal of speed without at the same time giving occasion for suspicion. This man, dressed in a greatcoat, or rather a surtout, a little the worse for the journey, but which exhibited a ribbon of the Legion of Honour still fresh and brilliant, a decoration which also ornamented the under coat, might be recognised, not only by these signs, but also by the accent with which he spoke to the postilion, as a Frenchman. Another proof that he was born in the country of the universal language was afforded by the fact that he knew no other Italian words than the terms used in music, which can be made, like the *goddam* of Figaro, to take the place of all the nice intricacies of a language. "*Allegro!*" he called out to the postilions at every ascent. "*Moderato!*" he cried, as they descended. And any one who has ever travelled that road knows there are hills enough in going from Florence to Rome by the way of Aquapendente! These two words greatly amused the men to whom they were addressed. On reaching La Storta, the point from whence Rome is first visible, the traveller evinced none of the enthusiastic curiosity which usually leads strangers

to stand up and endeavour to catch sight of the dome of St. Peter's, which may be seen long before any other object is distinguishable. No, he merely drew a pocket-book from his pocket, and took from it a paper folded twice across, and after having examined it in a manner almost reverential, he said, "Good! I have it still."

The carriage entered by the Porta del Popolo, turned to the left, and stopped at the Hôtel d'Espagne. Maître Pastrini, our old acquaintance, received the traveller at the door, hat in hand. The traveller alighted, ordered a good dinner, and inquired the address of the house of Thomson and French, which was immediately given to him, as it was one of the most celebrated in Rome. It was situated in the Via dei Banchi, near St. Peter's. In Rome, as everywhere else, the arrival of a post-chaise is an event. Ten young descendants of Marius and the Gracchi, barefooted and out at elbows, with one hand resting on the hip and the other arm gracefully curved above the head, stared at the traveller, the post-chaise, and the horses; to these were added about fifty little vagabonds from the states of his Holiness, who levied a contribution for plunging into the Tiber at high water from the bridge of St. Angelo. Now, as the vagabonds and idlers of Rome, more fortunate than those of Paris, understand every language, and especially the French, they heard the traveller order an apartment, a dinner, and finally inquire the way to the house of Thomson and French. The consequence was that when the new-comer left the hotel with a guide, a man detached himself from the rest of the idlers, and without having been seen by the traveller, and apparently without being noticed by the guide, followed the stranger with as much skill as a Parisian agent of police would have used.

The Frenchman had been so impatient to reach the house of Thomson and French that he would not wait for the horses to be harnessed, but left word for the carriage to overtake him on the road, or to wait for him at the bankers' door. He reached it before the carriage arrived. The Frenchman entered, leaving his guide in the ante-room, who immediately entered into conversation with two or three of those industrious idlers who are always to be found in Rome at the entrance to banking-houses, churches, ruins, museums, or theatres. With the Frenchman, the man who had followed him entered too; the Frenchman knocked at the inner door, and entered the first room; his shadow did the same.

"Messrs. Thomson and French?" inquired the stranger.

A lackey rose at a sign from a confidential clerk, solemn

guardian of the first desk. "Whom shall I announce?" said the lackey.

"The Baron Danglars."

"Follow me!" said the man.

A door opened, through which the lackey and the baron disappeared. The man who had followed Danglars sat down on a bench. The clerk continued to write for the next five minutes; the man also preserved profound silence, and remained perfectly motionless. Then the pen of the clerk ceased to move over the paper; he raised his head, and after assuring himself that they were alone, "Ah, ha!" he said, "here you are, Peppino!"

"Yes," was the laconic reply.

"You have found out that there is something worth having about this large gentleman?"

"There is no great merit due to me, for we were informed of it."

"You know his business here, then?"

"Of course; he has come to draw, but I don't know how much."

"You will know presently, my friend."

"Very well; only do not give me false information, as you did the other day."

"What do you mean? Of whom do you speak? Was it the Englishman who carried off three thousand crowns from here the other day?"

"No; he really had three thousand crowns, and we found them. I mean the Russian prince, who you said had thirty thousand livres, and we only found twenty-two thousand."

"You must have searched badly."

"Luigi Vampa himself searched."

"In that case he had either paid his debts—"

"A Russian!"

"—Or spent his money."

"It is possible, after all."

"It is certain; but you must let me make my observations, or the Frenchman will transact his business without my knowing the sum."

Peppino nodded, and taking a rosary from his pocket, began to mutter a prayer, while the clerk disappeared through the same door by which Danglars and the lackey had gone out. At the expiration of ten minutes the clerk returned with a bright countenance.

"Well?" asked Peppino of his friend.

"Joy, joy! the sum is large."

"Five or six millions, is it not?"

"Yes; you know the amount?"

"On the receipt of his Excellency the Count of Monte Cristo?"

"You know the count?"

"And for which they have given him a credit on Rome, Venice, and Vienna."

"That is so!" cried the clerk; "how came you to be so well informed?"

"I told you that we had been notified beforehand."

"Then why do you apply to me?"

"That I may be sure I have the right man."

"Yes, it is indeed he! Five millions,—a pretty sum, eh, Peppino?"

"Yes."

"Hush! here is our man!"

The clerk seized his pen, and Peppino his beads; one was writing and the other praying when the door opened. Danglars looked radiant with joy; the banker accompanied him to the door. Peppino followed Danglars.

According to the arrangements, the carriage was waiting at the door. The guide held the door open. Guides are useful people, who will turn their hands to anything. Danglars leaped into the carriage like a young man of twenty. The *cicerone* reclosed the door and sprang up by the side of the coachman. Peppino mounted the seat behind.

"Will your excellency visit St. Peter's?" asked the *cicerone.*

"What for?"

"Why, to see it, of course!"

"I did not come to Rome to see," said Danglars, aloud; then he added softly, with an avaricious smile, "I came to touch!" and he tapped his pocket-book, in which he had just placed a letter.

"Then your excellency is going—"

"To the hotel."

"Casa Pastrini!" said the *cicerone* to the coachman, and the carriage set off at a rapid rate. Ten minutes afterwards the baron entered his apartments, and Peppino stationed himself on the bench outside the door of the hotel, after having whispered something in the ear of one of the descendants of Marius and the Gracchi whom we noticed at the beginning of the chapter, who immediately ran down the road leading to the Capitol at his fullest speed. Danglars was tired and sleepy; he therefore went to bed, placing his pocket-book under his pillow. Peppino had a little spare time, so he had a game of *morra* with the *facchini,*

lost three crowns, and then to console himself, drank a bottle of Orvietto wine.

The next morning Danglars awoke late, though he had gone to bed so early; he had not slept well for five or six nights, even when he had slept at all. He breakfasted heartily, and caring little, as he said, for the beauties of the Eternal City, ordered post-horses at noon. But Danglars had not reckoned upon the formalities of the police and the idleness of the master of the post. The horses arrived only at two o'clock, and the guide did not bring the passport till three. All these preparations had collected a number of idlers round the door of Maître Pastrini's; the descendants of Marius and the Gracchi were also not wanting. The baron walked triumphantly through those groups of spectators, who, for the sake of gain, styled him "your excellency." As Danglars had hitherto contented himself with being called a baron, he felt rather flattered at the title of excellency, and distributed a dozen pauls among the crowd, who were ready, for twelve more, to call him "your highness."

"Which road?" asked the postilion, in Italian.

"The Ancona road," replied the baron.

Maître Pastrini interpreted the question and answer, and the horses galloped off. Danglars intended travelling to Venice, where he would receive one part of his fortune, and then proceeding to Vienna, where he could find the rest, he meant to take up his residence in the latter town, which he had been told was a city of pleasure.

He had scarcely advanced three leagues out of Rome when daylight began to disappear. Danglars had not intended starting so late, or he would have remained; he put his head out and asked the postilion how long it would be before they reached the next town.

"*Non capisco*," was the reply.

Danglars bent his head, by which he meant to imply, "Very well."

The carriage again moved on. "I will stop at the first post-house," said Danglars to himself. He still felt the same self-satisfaction which he had experienced the previous evening, and which had procured him so good a night's rest. He was luxuriously stretched in a good English carriage, with double springs; he was drawn by four good horses, at full gallop; he knew the relay to be at a distance of seven leagues. What subject of meditation could present itself to the banker, so fortunately become bankrupt?

Danglars thought for ten minutes upon his wife in Paris;

another ten minutes upon his daughter travelling about with Mademoiselle d'Armilly; another ten minutes was given to his creditors, and the manner in which he would spend their money; and then, having no subject left for contemplation, he shut his eyes, and fell asleep. Now and then a jolt more violent than the rest caused him to open his eyes; then he felt that he was still carried with great rapidity over the same suburbs of Rome, so thickly strewn with broken aqueducts, which look like granite giants petrified in the midst of their course. But the night was cold, dull, and rainy; and it was much more pleasant for a traveller to remain in the warm carriage than to put his head out of the window to make inquiries of a postilion, who could answer only "*Non capisco.*" Danglars therefore continued to sleep, saying to himself that he would be sure to awake at the post-house.

The carriage stopped. Danglars fancied they had reached the long-desired point; he opened his eyes, looked through the window, expecting to find himself in the midst of some town, or at least village, but he saw nothing but a kind of ruin whence three or four men went and came like shadows. Danglars waited for a moment, expecting the postilion to come and demand payment, having finished his stage. He intended taking advantage of the opportunity to make inquiries of the new conductor; but the horses were unharnessed, and others put in their places, without any one claiming money from the traveller. Danglars, astonished, opened the door; but a strong hand pushed him back, and the carriage rolled on. The baron was completely roused. "Eh!" he said to the postilion, "eh, *mio caro?*"

This was another little piece of Italian the baron had learned by hearing his daughter sing Italian duets with Cavalcanti; but *mio caro* made no reply. Danglars then opened the window.

"Come, my friend," he said, thrusting his head through the opening, "where are we going?"

"*Dentro la testa!*" answered a solemn and imperious voice, accompanied by a menacing gesture.

Danglars thought *Dentro la testa* meant "Put in your head!" It will be observed that he was making rapid progress in Italian. He obeyed, not without some uneasiness, which, momentarily increasing, caused his mind, instead of being as unoccupied and drowsy as it was when he began his journey, to fill with ideas which were very likely to keep a traveller awake, especially one in his situation. His eyes acquired that keenness of vision which at first strong emotions give, and which afterwards fails

from being too much taxed. Before we are alarmed, we see correctly; when we are alarmed, we see double; and when we have been alarmed, we see nothing but trouble. Danglars observed a man in a cloak galloping at the right-hand side of the carriage. "Some gendarme!" he exclaimed. "Can I have been signalled by the French telegraphs to the pontifical authorities?" He resolved to end his anxiety. "Where are you taking me?" he asked.

"*Dentro la testa,*" replied the same voice, with the same menacing accent.

Danglars turned to the left; another man on horseback was galloping on that side. "Decidedly!" said Danglars, with the perspiration on his forehead, "I am arrested." And he threw himself back in the carriage, not this time to sleep, but to think. Soon afterwards the moon rose. He then saw the great aqueducts, those stone phantoms which he had before remarked; only then they were on the right hand, now they were on the left. He understood that they had described a circle, and were bringing him back to Rome. "Oh, unfortunate!" he cried, "they must have obtained my extradition." The carriage continued to roll on with frightful speed. A terrible hour elapsed, for every spot they passed indicated that they were returning on the road. At length he saw a dark mass, against which it seemed that the carriage must dash; but it made a turn, leaving behind it the mass, which was one of the ramparts encircling Rome.

"Oh, oh!" cried Danglars, "we are not returning to Rome; then it is not justice which is pursuing me! Gracious heavens! another idea presents itself; what if they should be—"

His hair stood on end. He remembered those interesting stories, so little believed in Paris, respecting Roman bandits; he remembered the adventures that Albert de Morcerf had related when it was intended that he should marry Mademoiselle Eugénie. "They are robbers perhaps!" he muttered. Just then the carriage rolled on something harder than the gravelled road. Danglars hazarded a look on both sides of the road, and perceived monuments of a singular form; and his mind being preoccupied with Morcerf's adventure, which he now recalled in all its details, he felt sure that he must be on the Appian Way. On the left, in a sort of valley, he perceived a circular excavation. It was Caracalla's circus. On a word from the man who rode on the right-hand side of the carriage, the carriage stopped. At the same time the door on the left-hand side was opened. "*Scendi!*" exclaimed a commanding voice. Danglars in-

stantly descended; though he did not yet speak Italian, he understood it already. More dead than alive, he looked around him. Four men surrounded him, besides the postilion.

"*Di quà,*" said one of the men, descending a little path leading out of the Appian Way. Danglars followed his guide without opposition, and had no need to turn round to see whether the three others were following him. Still, it seemed to him that they stopped at equal distances from one another, like sentinels. After walking for about ten minutes, during which Danglars did not exchange a single word with his guide, he found himself between a hillock and a clump of high weeds; three men, standing silent, formed a triangle, of which he was the centre. He wished to speak, but his tongue refused to move.

"*Avanti!*" said the same sharp and imperative voice.

This time Danglars understood by word and by gesture; for the man who walked behind him pushed him so rudely that he struck against the guide. This guide was our friend Peppino, who dashed into the thicket of high weeds through a path which none but lizards or polecats could have imagined to be an open road. Peppino stopped before a rock covered by thick hedges; the rock, half-open, afforded a passage to the young man, who disappeared like the evil spirits in the fairy tales. The voice and gesture of the man who followed Danglars ordered him to do the same. There was no longer any doubt; the bankrupt was in the hands of Roman banditti. Danglars acquitted himself like a man placed between two dangerous positions, and who is rendered brave by fear. Notwithstanding his large stomach, certainly not intended to penetrate the crevices to be found in the suburbs of Rome, he slid down like Peppino, and closing his eyes, fell upon his feet. As he touched the ground, he opened his eyes. The path was wide, but dark. Peppino, who cared little for being recognised now that he was in his own place, struck a light and lit a torch. Two other men descended after Danglars, forming the rear-guard; and pushing Danglars whenever he happened to stop, they arrived by a gentle declivity at the centre of a cross-road of sinister appearance. Indeed, the panels of the walls, hollowed out in sepulchres placed one above another, seemed, in contrast with the white stones, to open their large dark eyes, like those which we see in the heads of skeletons.

A sentinel struck his carbine against his left hand. "Who goes there?" he cried.

"Friends! friends!" said Peppino; "but where is the captain?"

"There!" said the sentinel, pointing over his shoulder to a sort of large hall hollowed out of the rock, the lights from which shone into the passage through the large arched openings.

"Fine spoil, captain, fine spoil!" said Peppino, in Italian, and taking Danglars by the collar of his coat, he dragged him to an opening resembling a door, through which they entered the hall, which the captain appeared to have made his dwelling-place.

"Is this the man?" asked the captain, who was attentively reading Plutarch's *Life of Alexander*.

"Himself, captain, himself."

"Very well; show him to me."

At this rather impertinent order, Peppino raised his torch to Danglars's face, who hastily drew back that he might not have his eyelashes burned. His agitated features presented all the signs of pale and hideous terror.

"The man is tired," said the captain; "conduct him to his bed."

"Oh!" murmured Danglars, "that bed is probably one of the coffins hollowed in the wall, and the sleep I shall enjoy will be death from one of the poniards I see glistening in the shade."

From the depths of the hall were now seen to rise from their beds of dried leaves or the hides of wolves the companions of the man who had been found by Albert de Morcerf reading *Cæsar's Commentaries*, and by Danglars studying the *Life of Alexander*. The banker uttered a groan and followed his guide; he neither supplicated nor exclaimed. He no longer possessed strength, will, power, or feeling; he followed where they led him. At length he found himself at the foot of a staircase, and he mechanically lifted his foot five or six times. Then a low door was opened before him; and bending his head to avoid striking his forehead, he entered a small room cut out of the rock. The cell was clean, though naked, and dry, though situated at an immeasurable distance under the earth. A bed made of dried leaves covered with goatskins was not arranged, but spread in a corner of the cell. Danglars, on beholding it, brightened, fancying it a type of safety. "Oh, God be praised!" he said; "it is a real bed!"

"*Ecco!*" said the guide; and pushing Danglars into the cell, he closed the door upon him.

A bolt grated; Danglars was a prisoner. Besides, had there been no bolt, it would have been impossible for him to pass through the midst of the garrison who held the catacombs of St. Sebastian, encamped round a master whom our readers must

have recognised as the famous Luigi Vampa. Danglars too had recognised the bandit, in whose existence he would not believe when Albert de Morcerf mentioned him in Paris; and not only did he recognise him, but also the cell in which Albert had been confined, and which was probably kept for the accommodation of strangers. These recollections were dwelt upon with some pleasure by Danglars, and restored him to some degree of tranquillity. Since the bandits had not despatched him at once, he felt sure that they would not kill him at all. They had arrested him for the purpose of robbery, and as he had only a few louis about him, he had no doubt that he would be released. He remembered that Morcerf had been rated at something like four thousand crowns; and as he considered himself of much greater importance than Morcerf, he fixed his own ransom at eight thousand crowns. Eight thousand crowns amounted to forty-eight thousand livres; and he now had about five million fifty thousand livres. With this sum he could certainly manage to free himself. Therefore, tolerably sure of being able to extricate himself from his position, since it was without example that a man should be rated at five million fifty thousand livres, he stretched himself on his bed, and after turning round two or three times, fell asleep with the tranquillity of the hero whose life Luigi Vampa was studying.

CHAPTER CXVI

LUIGI VAMPA'S BILL OF FARE

We awake from every sleep except the one dreaded by Danglars. He awoke. To a Parisian accustomed to silken curtains, walls hung with velvet drapery, and the perfume of burning wood, that awaking in a limestone cave would naturally seem like a disagreeable dream. But in such a situation a single moment suffices to change the strongest doubt into certainty. "Yes, yes," he murmured, "I am in the hands of the brigands of whom Albert de Morcerf spoke." His first movement was to take a long breath that he might know whether he was wounded. He borrowed this from *Don Quixote*, the only book, not which he had ever read, but of which he retained any remembrance.

"No," he cried, "they have not killed or wounded me; but perhaps they have robbed me!" and he thrust his hands into his pockets. They were untouched; the hundred louis he had reserved for his journey from Rome to Venice were in his

trousers' pocket, and in that of his greatcoat he found the little note-case containing his letter of credit for five million fifty thousand livres. "Singular bandits!" he exclaimed; "they have left me my purse and pocket-book. As I was saying last night, they intend me to be ransomed. Holloa! here is my watch! Let me see what time it is." Danglars's watch, one of Bréguet's masterpieces, which he had carefully wound up on the previous night, struck half-past five. Without this Danglars would have been quite ignorant of the time, for daylight did not reach his cell. Should he demand an explanation from the bandits, or should he wait patiently for them to propose it? The last alternative seemed the most prudent; so he waited. He waited until twelve o'clock. During all this time a sentinel had been watching his door. At eight o'clock the sentinel on duty had been relieved. Danglars suddenly felt a strong inclination to see the person who kept watch over him. He had remarked that a few rays, not of daylight, but from a lamp, penetrated through the ill-joined planks of the door; he approached one of these openings just as the brigand was refreshing himself with a drink of brandy, which, owing to the leather bottle containing it, sent forth an odour which was extremely unpleasant to Danglars. "Faugh!" he exclaimed, retreating to the extreme corner of his cell.

At twelve this man was replaced by another functionary, and Danglars, wishing to catch sight of his new guardian, approached the door again. He was an athletic, gigantic bandit, with large eyes, thick lips, and a flat nose; his red hair fell in dishevelled masses like snakes around his shoulders. "Ah, ah!" cried Danglars, "this fellow is more like an ogre than anything else; however, I am rather too old and tough to be very good eating!" It may be seen that Danglars still retained animation enough to indulge in jesting. At that moment, as if to prove that he was not an ogre, the man took some black bread, cheese, and onions, from his wallet, which he began devouring voraciously.

"The devil take me," said Danglars, glancing at the bandit's dinner through the crevices of the door,—"the devil take me if I can understand how people can eat such filth!" and he withdrew to seat himself upon his goatskin, which recalled to him the smell of the brandy.

But the secrets of nature are incomprehensible, and there are certain invitations contained in even the coarsest food which appeal very irresistibly to a fasting stomach. Danglars felt his own not to be very well supplied just then, and gradually the

man appeared less ugly, the bread less black, and the cheese more fresh. Even those vulgar onions—disgusting food of the savage—recalled to his mind certain sauces and side-dishes which his cook prepared in a very superior manner whenever he said, "M. Deniseau, let me have a nice little *fricassée* to-day." He rose and knocked at the door; the bandit raised his head. Danglars saw that he was heard, and redoubled his blows. "*Chè cosa?*" asked the bandit.

"Come, come," said Danglars, tapping his fingers against the door, "I think it is quite time to think of giving me also something to eat!"

But whether he did not understand him, or whether he had received no orders respecting the nourishment of Danglars, the giant, without answering, applied himself again to his dinner. Danglars felt his pride hurt, and not wishing to commit himself with the brute, threw himself down again on his goatskin, and did not breathe another word.

Four hours passed by; the giant was replaced by another bandit. Danglars, who suffered distressing gnawings at the stomach, rose softly, again applied his eye to the crack of the door, and recognised the intelligent countenance of his guide. It was indeed Peppino, who was preparing to mount guard as comfortably as possible by seating himself opposite to the door, and placing between his legs an earthen pan containing chick-peas stewed with bacon. Near the pan he also placed a pretty little basket of grapes and a bottle of Orvietto wine. Peppino was decidedly an epicure. While witnessing these preparations, Danglars's mouth watered. "Come," he said to himself, "let me see if he will be more tractable than the other!" and he tapped gently at the door.

"Coming!" exclaimed Peppino, who, from frequenting the house of Maître Pastrini, understood French perfectly.

Danglars immediately recognised him as the man who had called out in such a furious manner, "Put in your head!" But this was not the time for recrimination, so he assumed his most agreeable manner and said with a gracious smile, "Excuse me, monsieur, but are they not going to give me any dinner?"

"Does your excellency happen to be hungry?"

"Happen to be hungry! that's excellent, when I have not eaten for twenty-four hours!" muttered Danglars. Then he added aloud, "Yes, monsieur, I am hungry,—very hungry!"

"And your excellency would like to eat—"

"This instant, if that is possible."

"Nothing more easy," said Peppino. "Here one may

procure whatever he wishes, paying for it, of course, as is done among all honest Christians."

"Of course!" cried Danglars; "though in fact those who capture you and imprison you ought at least to feed their prisoners."

"Ah, your excellency!" replied Peppino, "that is not the custom."

"That is a pretty bad reason," said Danglars, who counted on prevaling with his guardian by his affability; "nevertheless I am satisfied. Come, let them give me something to eat."

"This very moment. What would your excellency like?" and Peppino placed his pan on the ground, so that the steam rose directly under the nostrils of Danglars. "Give your orders!"

"Have you kitchens here?"

"Kitchens? of course, complete ones!"

"And cooks?"

"Excellent!"

"Well; a fowl, fish, game, it signifies little, so that I eat."

"As your excellency pleases. You mentioned a fowl, I think?"

"Yes, a fowl."

Peppino, turning round, shouted, "A fowl for his excellency!"

His voice yet echoed in the archway when a young man, handsome, graceful, and half-naked, appeared, bearing a fowl in a silver dish on his head, without the assistance of his hands.

"I could almost believe myself at the Café de Paris!" murmured Danglars.

"Here, your excellency!" said Peppino, taking the fowl from the young bandit and placing it on the worm-eaten table, which, with a stool and the goatskin bed, formed the entire furniture of the cell. Danglars asked for a knife and fork. "Here, your excellency," said Peppino, offering him a little blunt knife and a boxwood fork. Danglars took the knife in one hand and the fork in the other, and was about to cut up the fowl.

"Pardon me, your excellency," said Peppino, placing his hand on the banker's shoulder; "people pay here before they eat. They might not be satisfied, and—"

"Ah, ah!" thought Danglars, "this is no longer like Paris,—without reckoning that I shall probably be fleeced! But let us do things in the grand style. I have always heard of Italy's cheap markets; a fowl is probably worth about twelve sous at Rome. There," he said, throwing down a louis.

Peppino picked up the louis, and Danglars again prepared

to carve the fowl. "Stay a moment, your excellency," said Peppino, rising; "you still owe me something."

"I said they would fleece me," thought Danglars; but resolving to resist the extortion, he said, "Come, how much do I owe you for this fowl?"

"Your excellency has given me a louis on account."

"A louis on account for a fowl!"

"Certainly; and your excellency now owes me 4,999 louis!"

Danglars opened his eyes on hearing this gigantic joke. "Ah! very droll," he murmured, "very droll!"

And he got ready again to carve the fowl, but Peppino with his left hand seized Danglars's right, and extended his other hand. "Come," said he.

"What! you are not joking?" said Danglars.

"We never joke, your excellency," said Peppino, solemn as a Quaker.

"What! a hundred thousand livres for that fowl?"

"Your excellency, you can't imagine how hard it is to raise poultry in these cursed caves."

"Come, come," said Danglars; "that is very droll,—very amusing, I allow; but as I am very hungry, pray allow me to eat. Stay, here is another louis for you."

"Then there remains only 4998 louis," said Peppino, with the same indifference; "I shall get them all in time."

"Oh! as for that," said Danglars, angry in his perseverance in the jest,—"as for that, you will never succeed. Go to the devil! You do not know with whom you have to deal!"

Peppino made a sign, and the youth hastily removed the fowl. Danglars threw himself upon his goatskin, and Peppino, reclosing the door, again began eating his peas and bacon. Though Danglars could not see Peppino, the noise of his teeth allowed no doubt as to his occupation. He was certainly eating, and noisily too, like an ill-bred man. "Brute!" said Danglars. Peppino pretended not to hear him, and without even turning his head, continued to eat slowly. Danglars's stomach seemed to him to be perforated, like the vessels of the Danaïdes; he could not believe that he should ever be able to fill it again; still he had patience for another half-hour, which appeared to him like a century. He again rose and went to the door. "Come, monsieur," said he, "do not keep me starving here any longer, but tell what they want of me."

"Nay, your excellency, say rather, what you want of us. Give your orders, and we will execute them."

"Then open the door directly," Peppino obeyed. "*Pardieu!* I want something to eat!—to eat; do you hear?"

"You are hungry?"

"Come, you understand me."

"What would your excellency like to eat?"

"A piece of dry bread, since the fowls are beyond all price in this accursed place."

"Bread? very well. Holloa, there! some bread!" he exclaimed.

The youth brought a small loaf.

"How much?" asked Danglars.

"4998 louis," said Peppino; "you have paid two louis in advance."

"What! one hundred thousand livres for a loaf?"

"One hundred thousand livres," repeated Peppino.

"But you only asked one hundred thousand livres for a fowl!"

"We do not serve by the card, but at a fixed price. It signifies nothing whether you eat much or little, whether you have ten dishes or one; it is always the same price."

"What! still keeping up this silly jest? My dear fellow, it is absurd, stupid! You had better tell me at once that you wish me to die of starvation."

"Oh, dear, no, your excellency, unless you intend to commit suicide. Pay and eat."

"And what am I to pay with, brute?" said Danglars, enraged. "Do you suppose I carry one hundred thousand livres in my pocket?"

"Your excellency has five million fifty thousand livres in your pocket; that will be fifty fowls at one hundred thousand livres apiece, and half a fowl for the fifty thousand."

Danglars shuddered. The bandage fell from his eyes, and he understood the joke, which he did not think quite so stupid as he had done just before. "Come," he said, "if I pay you the one hundred thousand livres, will you be satisfied, and allow me to eat at my ease?"

"Certainly," said Peppino.

"But how can I pay them?"

"Oh, nothing easier; you have an account opened with Messrs. Thomson and French, Via dei Banchi, Rome; give me a draft for 4998 louis on these gentlemen, and our banker shall take it."

Danglars thought it as well to comply with a good grace; so he took the pen, ink, and paper Peppino offered him, wrote

the bill, and signed it. "Here," he said,—"here is a draft payable at sight."

"And here is your fowl."

Danglars sighed while he carved the fowl; it appeared very thin for the price it had cost. As for Peppino, he read the paper attentively, put it into his pocket, and continued eating his peas.

CHAPTER CXVII

THE PARDON

THE next day Danglars was again hungry; certainly the air of that dungeon was very appetising. The prisoner expected that he would be at no expense that day, for, like an economical man, he had concealed half of his fowl and a piece of bread in the corner of his cell. But he had no sooner eaten than he felt thirsty; he had not thought of that. He struggled against his thirst till his dry tongue adhered to his palate; then, no longer able to resist, he called out. The sentinel opened the door; it was a new face. He thought it would be better to transact business with his old acquaintance, so he sent for Peppino.

"Here I am, your excellency," said Peppino, with an eagerness which Danglars thought favourable to him. "What do you want?"

"Something to drink."

"Your excellency knows that wine is beyond all price near Rome."

"Then give me water," cried Danglars, endeavouring to parry the blow.

"Oh, water is even more scarce than wine, your excellency; there has been such a drought."

"Come," said Danglars, "we are going to have the old story again, it seems." And while he smiled as he attempted to regard the affair as a joke, he felt his temples moist with perspiration. "Come, my friend," said he, seeing that he made no impression on Peppino, "you will not refuse me a glass of wine?"

"I have already told your excellency," replied Peppino, gravely, "that we do not sell at retail."

"Well, then, let me have a bottle of the least expensive."

"They are all of the same price."

"And what is that?"

"Twenty-five thousand livres per bottle."

"Tell me," cried Danglars, in a voice of extreme bitterness,

—"tell me that you wish to despoil me of all; it will be sooner over than devouring me piecemeal."

"It is possible such may be the master's intention."

"The master! who is he?"

"The person to whom you were conducted yesterday."

"Where is he?"

"Here."

"Let me see him."

"Certainly." And the next moment Luigi Vampa appeared before Danglars.

"You sent for me?" he said to the prisoner.

"Are you, monsieur, the chief of those who brought me here?"

"Yes, your excellency."

"How much do you require for my ransom?"

"Why, in plain terms, the five millions you have about you."

Danglars felt a terrible spasm dart through his heart. "But this is all I have left in the world," he said, "out of an immense fortune. If you deprive me of that, take away my life also."

"We are forbidden to shed your blood."

"And by whom are you forbidden?"

"By him we obey."

"You do, then, obey some one?"

"Yes, a chief."

"I thought you said you were the chief."

"So I am, of these men; but there is another over me."

"And that chief,—is he subject to any one?"

"Yes."

"To whom?"

"To God."

Danglars remained thoughtful a moment. "I do not understand you," said he.

"That is possible."

"And did your superior tell you to treat me thus?"

"Yes."

"What is his purpose?"

"I know nothing about it."

"But my purse will be exhausted."

"Probably."

"Come," said Danglars, "will you take a million?"

"No."

"Two millions? three? four? Come, four? I will give them to you on condition that you let me go."

"Why do you offer me four millions for what is worth five

millions? This is a kind of usury, banker, that I do not understand."

"Take all, then,—take all, I tell you, and kill me!"

"Come, come, calm yourself. You will excite your blood, and that would produce an appetite it would require a million a day to satisfy. Be more economical."

"But when I have no more money left to pay you?" asked Danglars, in despair.

"Then you must suffer hunger."

"Suffer hunger?" said Danglars, becoming pale.

"Most likely," replied Vampa, coolly.

"But you say you do not wish to kill me?"

"No."

"And yet you will let me perish with hunger?"

"Ah, that is a different thing."

"Well, then, wretches!" cried Danglars, "I will defy your infamous calculations! I would rather die at once! You may torture, torment, kill me, but you shall not have my signature again!"

"As your excellency pleases," said Vampa, as he left the cell.

Danglars, raving, threw himself on the goatskin. Who could these men be? Who was the invisible chief? What could be his projects towards him? And why, when every one else was allowed to be ransomed, might he not also be? Oh, yes! certainly a speedy, sudden death would be a fine means of deceiving these remorseless enemies, who appeared to pursue him with such incomprehensible vengeance. But to die? For the first time perhaps in his life Danglars contemplated death, with a mixture of dread and desire. The time had come when the implacable spectre which exists in the mind of every human creature arrested his sight, and called out with every pulsation of his heart, "Thou shalt die!"

Danglars resembled a timid animal excited in the chase; first it flies, then despairs, and at last, by the very force of desperation, succeeds sometimes in escaping. Danglars meditated an escape; but the walls were solid rock, a man was sitting reading at the only outlet to the cell, and behind that man figures armed with guns continually passed. His resolution not to sign lasted two days, after which he offered a million for some food. They sent him a magnificent supper, and took his million.

From this time the unfortunate prisoner abandoned himself to the situation. He had suffered so much that he concluded not to expose himself to further suffering, and he submitted to all demands. At the end of twelve days, after having dined as in

his days of prosperity, he reckoned his accounts, and found that he had only fifty thousand livres left. Then a strange reaction took place. He who had just abandoned five millions endeavoured to save the fifty thousand livres he had left; and rather than give them up, he resolved to enter again upon his life of privation. He had gleams of hope that bordered on madness. He who for so long a time had forgotten God began to think that miracles were possible; that the accursed cave might be discovered by the officers of the papal states, who would release him; that then he would have fifty thousand remaining, which would be sufficient to save him from starvation. He prayed that this sum might be preserved to him, and as he prayed he wept. Three days passed thus, during which the name of God was constantly on his lips, if not in his heart. Sometimes he was delirious, and fancied he saw an old man stretched on a pallet; he also was dying of hunger.

On the fourth day he was no longer a man, but a living corpse. He had picked up every crumb that had been left from his former meals, and was beginning to eat the matting which covered the floor of his cell. Then he entreated Peppino, as he would a guardian angel, to give him food; he offered him one thousand livres for a mouthful of bread. But Peppino did not answer. On the fifth day he dragged himself to the door of the cell.

"Are you not a Christian?" he said, falling on his knees. "Do you wish to assassinate a man who is your brother before God? Oh, my friends, my friends of other days!" he murmured, and fell with his face to the ground. Then rising with a species of despair, he exclaimed, "The chief! the chief!"

"Here I am," said Vampa, instantly appearing; "what do you want?"

"Take my last gold," stammered Danglars, holding out his pocket-book, "and let me live here in this cavern. I ask no more for liberty; I ask only to live!"

"Then you suffer a great deal?"

"Oh, yes, yes, cruelly!"

"Still, there have been men who suffered more than you."

"I do not think so."

"Yes; those who have died of hunger."

Danglars thought of the old man whom in his hours of delirium he had seen groaning on his bed. He struck his forehead on the ground and groaned. "Yes," he said, "there have been some who have suffered more than I have; but then they must have been martyrs at least."

"Do you repent?" asked a deep, solemn voice, which caused Danglars's hair to stand on end. His feeble eyes endeavoured to distinguished objects, and behind the bandit he saw a man enveloped in a cloak, half-hidden in the shadow of a stone column.

"Of what must I repent?" stammered Danglars.

"Of the evil you have done," said the voice.

"Oh, yes! I repent! I repent!" cried Danglars; and he struck his breast with his emaciated fist.

"Then I forgive you," said the man, dropping his cloak, and advancing to the light.

"The Count of Monte Cristo!" said Danglars, more pale from terror than he had been just before from hunger and misery.

"You are mistaken; I am not the Count of Monte Cristo!"

"Then who are you?"

"I am he whom you sold and dishonoured; I am he whose betrothed you prostituted; I am he upon whom you trampled that you might raise yourself to fortune; I am he whose father you condemned to die of starvation,—who had also condemned you to die of starvation, and who yet forgives you, because he also needs forgiveness. I am Edmond Dantès!"

Danglars uttered a cry, and fell prostrate.

"Rise," said the count; "your life is safe. The same good fortune has not happened to your accomplices; one is mad, the other dead. Keep the fifty thousand livres you have left; I give them to you. The five millions you robbed from the hospitals has been restored to them by an unknown hand. And now eat and drink; to-night you are my guest. Vampa, when this man is satisfied, let him be free."

Danglars remained prostrate while the count withdrew; when he raised his head, he saw nothing more than a kind of shadow disappearing in the passage, before which the bandits bowed. According to the count's directions, Danglars was waited on by Vampa, who brought him the best wine and fruits of Italy, then, having taken him away in his post-chaise, dropped him on the road, and left him leaning against a tree. He remained there all night, not knowing where he was. When daylight dawned, he saw that he was near a stream; he was thirsty, and dragged himself towards it. As he stooped down to drink, he perceived that his hair had become quite white.

CHAPTER CXVIII

THE FIFTH OF OCTOBER

It was about six o'clock in the evening; an opal-coloured light, through which an autumnal sun shed its golden rays, descended on the blue sea. The heat of the day had gradually decreased, and a light breeze arose, seeming like the respiration of nature on awakening from the burning siesta of the south; a delicious zephyr played along the coasts of the Mediterranean, and wafted from shore to shore the sweet perfume of plants, mingled with the fresh smell of the sea.

A light yacht, chaste and elegant in its form, was gliding amid the early vapours of the night over the immense lake which extends from Gibraltar to the Dardanelles, and from Tunis to Venice. The motion resembled that of a swan with its wings opened to the wind, gliding on the water. It advanced swiftly and at the same time gracefully, leaving behind it a glittering track. By degrees the sun disappeared behind the western horizon; but as though to justify the brilliant fancies of mythology, its indiscreet rays, reappearing on the summit of each wave, seemed to betray the god of fire hiding himself in the bosom of Amphitrite, who in vain endeavoured to conceal her lover beneath her azure mantle. The yacht moved rapidly on, though there did not appear to be sufficient wind to ruffle the curls on the head of a young girl. Standing at the bow was a tall man, of a dark complexion, who saw with dilating eyes that they were approaching a dark mass of land in the shape of a cone rising from the midst of the waves, like an immense Catalan hat.

"Is that Monte Cristo?" asked, in a melancholy tone, the traveller, to whose orders the yacht was for the time committed.

"Yes, your excellency," said the captain, "we have arrived!"

"We have arrived!" repeated the traveller, in an accent of indescribable sadness. Then he added in a low tone, "Yes; there is the harbour." And then he again plunged into a train of thought reflected in a smile sadder than tears. A few minutes afterwards a flash of light, which was extinguished instantly, was seen on the land, and the sound of fire-arms reached the yacht.

"Your excellency," said the captain, "that was the land signal; will you answer it yourself?"

"What signal?"

The captain pointed towards the island, up the side of which ascended a volume of smoke, increasing as it rose.

"Ah, yes," he said, as if awaking from a dream. "Give it to me."

The captain gave him a loaded carbine; the traveller slowly raised it, and fired in the air. Ten minutes afterwards the sails were brailed, and they cast anchor about five hundred feet from the little harbour. The skiff was already in the water, containing four rowers and the pilot. The traveller descended, and instead of sitting down at the stern of the boat, which had been decorated for him with a blue carpet, stood up with his arms crossed. The rowers waited, their oars half-lifted out of the water, like birds drying their wings.

"Go!" said the traveller. The eight oars fell into the water together without splashing a drop of water, and the boat, yielding to the impulsion, glided forward. In an instant they found themselves in a little harbour, formed in a natural creek; the boat touched the fine sand.

"Will your excellency be so good as to mount the shoulders of two of our men? they will carry you ashore." The young man answered this invitation with a gesture of indifference, and stepped into the water, which rose to his waist.

"Ah, your excellency!" murmured the pilot, "you should not have done so; the master will scold us for it."

The young man continued to advance, following the sailors, who chose a firm footing. After going about thirty feet, they landed. The young man stamped on the ground to shake off the wet, and looked round for some one to show him his road, for it was quite dark. Just as he turned, a hand rested on his shoulder, and a voice which startled him exclaimed,—

"Good-evening, Maximilian! you are punctual; thank you!"

"Ah! is it you, count?" said the young man, in an almost joyful accent, pressing Monte Cristo's hand with both his own.

"Yes; you see I am as exact as you are. But you are dripping, my dear fellow; you must change your clothes, as Calypso said to Telemachus. Come, I have a habitation prepared for you, in which you will soon forget fatigue and cold."

Monte Cristo perceived that the young man had turned round; indeed, Morrel saw with surprise that the men who had brought him had left without being paid, or uttering a word. Already the sound of their oars might be heard as they returned to the yacht.

"Oh, yes," said the count, "you are looking for the sailors?"

"Yes; I paid them nothing, and yet they have gone."

"Never mind that, Maximilian," said Monte Cristo, smiling; "I have made an agreement with the navy that the access to my island shall be free of all charge. I have an agreement, as they say in civilised countries."

Morrel looked at the count with surprise. "Count," he said, "you are no longer the same that you were in Paris."

"How so?"

"Here you laugh."

The count's brow became clouded. "You are right to recall me to myself, Maximilian," he said; "I was delighted to see you again, and forgot for the moment that all happiness is fleeting."

"Oh, no, no, count!" cried Maximilian, seizing the count's hands; "pray laugh. Be happy, and prove to me by your indifference that life is evil only to those who suffer. Oh, how charitable, kind, and good you are! you affect this gaiety to inspire me with courage."

"You are wrong, Morrel; I was really happy."

"Then you forget me,—so much the better."

"How so?"

"Yes; for as the gladiator said to the emperor when he entered the arena, 'He who is going to die salutes you.'"

"Then you are not consoled?" asked the count, with a strange look.

"Oh!" exclaimed Morrel, with a glance full of bitter reproach, "have you believed that I could be?"

"Listen," said the count. "Do you understand the meaning of my words? You cannot take me for a commonplace man, a mere rattle, emitting a vague and senseless noise. When I ask you if you are consoled, I speak to you as a man for whom the human heart has no secrets. Well, Morrel, let us examine together the depths of your heart. Do you still feel the same stormy impatience of grief which makes the body start, as starts the wounded lion? Have you still that devouring thirst, which can be quenched only in the grave? Is there still that romance of regret which drives the living out of life in pursuit of death? Or is what you suffer but the prostration of exhausted courage, the weariness which stifles every struggling ray of hope? Has the loss of memory rendered it impossible for you to weep? Oh, my dear friend, if this be the case, if you can no longer weep, if your frozen heart be dead, if you put all your trust in God,—then, Maximilian, you are consoled; do not complain."

"Count," said Morrel, in firm and quiet tones, "listen to me,

as to a man whose thoughts are raised to heaven, though he remains on earth. I have come to you that I may die in the arms of a friend. There are indeed some whom I love. I love my sister Julie, I love her husband Emmanuel; but I want strong arms opened to me, and some one to smile on my last moments. My sister would be bathed in tears and fainting; I could not bear to see her suffer. Emmanuel would tear the weapon from my hand, and alarm the house with his cries. You, count, who are more than man; you whom I would call a god if you were not mortal,—you will conduct me gently and tenderly, will you not, even to the gates of death?"

"My friend," said the count, "I have still one doubt,—are you weak enough to pride yourself upon your sufferings?"

"No, indeed, I am calm," said Morrel, giving his hand to the count; "my pulse does not beat slower or faster than usual. No, I feel that I have reached the goal, and I will go no farther. You told me to wait and hope; do you know what you did, unfortunate adviser? I have waited a month; that is to say, I have suffered for a month! I have hoped (man is a poor, wretched creature!) I have hoped—what? I cannot tell,—something wonderful, an absurdity, a miracle. God only knows what,—he who has mingled with our reason that folly we call hope. Yes, I have waited; yes, I have hoped, count; and during this quarter of an hour we have been talking together you have unconsciously wounded, tortured my heart,—for every word you have uttered proves that there is no hope for me. Oh, count! I shall sleep calmly, deliciously in the arms of death!" Morrel pronounced these words with an energy which made the count shudder. "My friend," continued Morrel, "you named the 5th of October as the term of the delay you asked; to-day is the 5th of October." He took out his watch. "It is now nine o'clock; I have yet three hours to live."

"Be it so," said the count; "come."

Morrel mechanically followed the count, and they had entered the grotto before he perceived it. He felt a carpet under his feet, a door opened, perfumes surrounded him, and a brilliant light dazzled his eyes. Morrel hesitated to advance; he dreaded the enervating effect of all that he saw. Monte Cristo drew him in gently. "Why," said he, "should we not spend the last three hours remaining to us of life like those ancient Romans who, when condemned by Nero, their emperor and heir, sat down at a table covered with flowers, and inhaled death with the perfume of heliotropes and roses?"

Morrel smiled. "As you please," he said; "death is always death,—absence of life, and consequently of grief, that is, forgetfulness, repose." He sat down, and Monte Cristo placed himself opposite to him. They were in the marvellous dining-room before described, where the statues had baskets on their heads, always filled with fruits and flowers.

Morrel had looked vaguely at everything, and probably had seen nothing. "Let us talk like men," he said, looking at the count.

"Proceed!"

"Count!" said Morrel, "you are the epitome of all human knowledge, and you impress me as one who has descended from a wiser and more advanced world than ours."

"There is something true in what you say," said the count, with that smile which made him so handsome. "I have descended from a planet called Grief."

"I believe all that you tell me without searching its significance. Thus, you told me to live, and I have lived; you told me to hope, and I have almost hoped. I venture therefore to ask you, as if you had experienced death, is it painful to die?"

Monte Cristo looked upon Morrel with indescribable tenderness. "Yes," he said,—"yes, doubtless it is painful, if you violently break the outer covering which obstinately begs for life. If you plunge a dagger into your flesh; if with a stupid bullet, always irregular in its course, you perforate your brain, to which the least shock gives pain,—certainly you will suffer, you will quit life in an odious way, and in the midst of your despairing agony will find that it was preferable to a repose so dearly bought."

"Yes," said Morrel, "I understand; death, like life, has its secrets of pain and of pleasure. It is only necessary to know them."

"You have spoken truly, Maximilian; death is, according to the care we take to be on good or bad terms with it, either a friend who rocks us gently as a nurse, or an enemy who violently drags the soul from the body. Some day, when the world is much older, and when mankind will be masters of all the destructive powers in nature to make them serve the general good of humanity,—when mankind, as you were just saying, have discovered the secrets of death, then death will be as sweet and voluptuous as a slumber in the arms of your beloved."

"And if you wished to die, you would know *how* to die in that manner, count?"

"Yes."

Morrel extended his hand. "Now I understand," he said "why you had me brought here to this desolate spot in the midst of the ocean, to this subterranean palace; it is because you love me, is it not, count? It is because you love me well enough to give me one of those deaths of which you were just speaking,—a death without agony; a death which will allow me to hear myself pronounce Valentine's name while clasping your hand."

"Yes, you have guessed rightly, Morrel," said the count; "that is what I intend."

"Thanks! the idea that to-morrow I shall no longer suffer is sweet to my heart."

"Do you then regret nothing?"

"No," replied Morrel.

"Not even me?" asked the count, with deep emotion.

Morrel's clear eye was for the moment clouded, then it shone with unusual lustre, and a large tear rolled down his cheek.

"What!" said the count, "do you still regret anything in the world, and yet die?"

"Oh, I entreat you!" exclaimed Morrel, in a low voice, "do not speak another word, count; do not prolong my torture!"

The count fancied that he was yielding; and this belief revived the horrible doubt already once conquered at the Château d'If. "I am endeavouring," he thought, "to make this man happy; I look upon this restitution as a weight thrown into the scale to balance the evil I have wrought. Now, supposing I am deceived, if this man has not been unhappy enough to merit happiness, alas! what would become of me who can atone for evil only by doing good?" Then he said aloud, "Listen, Morrel; I see that your grief is great, but still you believe in God, and do not like to risk the salvation of your soul."

Morrel smiled sadly. "Count," he said, "I swear to you my soul is no longer my own."

"Maximilian, you know that I have no relative in the world. I have accustomed myself to regard you as my son; well, then, to save my son I would sacrifice my life, and with better reason my fortune."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that you wish to quit life because you do not understand all the enjoyments which are within reach of a large fortune. Morrel, I possess nearly a hundred millions; I give them to you. With such a fortune you can attain every wish. Are you ambitious? every career is open to you. Overturn

the world, change its character, yield to mad ideas, be even criminal—but live."

"Count, I have your word," said Morrel, coldly; then, taking out his watch, he added, "it is half-past eleven."

"Morrel, can you intend it in my house, beneath my eyes?"

"Then let me go," said Maximilian, "or I shall think that you do not love me for my own sake, but for your own;" and he rose.

"It is well," said Monte Cristo, whose countenance brightened at these words; "you wish it, and you are inflexible. Yes, as you said, you are indeed wretched, and a miracle alone can cure you. Sit down, Morrel, and wait."

Morrel obeyed. The count rose, and unlocking a closet with a key suspended from his gold chain, took from it a little silver casket beautifully carved and chased, the corners of which represented four bending figures, similar to the Caryatides, the forms of women, symbols of the angels aspiring to heaven. He placed the casket on the table; then opening it, he took out a little golden box, the top of which flew open on the pressing of a secret spring. This box contained an unctuous substance, partly solid, of which it was impossible to discover the colour, owing to the reflection of the polished gold, sapphires, rubies, and emeralds which ornamented the box. It was a mixed mass of blue, purple, and gold. The count took out a small quantity of this with a gilt spoon, and offered it to Morrel, fixing a long steadfast glance upon him. It was then observable that the substance was of a greenish hue.

"This is what you asked for," he said, "and what I promised to give you."

"I thank you from the depths of my heart," said the young man, taking the spoon from the hands of the count.

Monte Cristo took another spoon, and dipped it into the golden box.

"What are you going to do, my friend?" asked Morrel, arresting his hand.

"Faith! Morrel," he said, smiling, "I believe—God forgive me—that I am as weary of life as you are; and since the opportunity presents itself—"

"Stay!" said the young man. "You, who love and are beloved; you, who have faith and hope,—oh! do not follow my example; in your case it would be a crime. Adieu, my noble and generous friend, adieu; I will go and tell Valentine what you have done for me."

And slowly, though without any hesitation, pausing only to

press the count's hand, he swallowed the mysterious substance offered by Monte Cristo. Then they were both silent. Ali, mute and attentive, brought the pipes and coffee, and disappeared. By degrees the lamps gradually faded in the hands of the marble statues which held them, and the perfumes appeared less powerful to Morrel. Seated opposite to him, Monte Cristo watched him in the shadow, and Morrel saw nothing but the bright eyes of the count. An overpowering sadness took possession of the young man; his hands relaxed their hold; the objects in the room gradually lost their form and colour; and his disturbed vision seemed to perceive doors and curtains open in the wall.

"Friend," he cried, "I feel that I am dying; thanks!" he made a last effort to extend his hand, but it fell powerless beside him. Then it appeared to him that Monte Cristo smiled, not with the strange and fearful expression which had sometimes revealed to him the secrets of his heart, but with the benevolent kindness of a father for an infant. At the same time the count appeared to increase in stature; his form, nearly double its usual height, stood out in relief against the red tapestry; his black hair was thrown back; and he appeared erect and exalted, like one of those angels with which the wicked are threatened at the day of judgment. Morrel, overpowered, fell back in the armchair; a delicious torpor was insinuated into every vein; changing ideas presented themselves to his brain, like the new designs in the kaleidoscope. Enervated, prostrate, panting, he became unconscious of outward objects; he seemed to be entering that vague delirium preceding death. He wished once again to press the count's hand; but his own was immovable. He wished to articulate a last farewell; but his tongue lay motionless and heavy in his throat, like a stone at the mouth of a sepulchre. Involuntarily his languid eyes closed. Nevertheless, through his eyelashes he saw a well-known form moving amid the obscurity with which he thought himself surrounded. It was the count, who had just opened a door.

Immediately a brilliant light shining in the chamber adjoining, or rather, in a marvellous palace, filled the salon where Morrel abandoned himself to the pleasing pains of death. Then he saw a woman of wondrous beauty appear on the threshold of the door separating the two rooms. Pale, and sweetly smiling, she looked like an angel of mercy conjuring the angel of vengeance. "Is it heaven that opens before me?" thought the dying man; "that angel resembles the one I have lost." Monte Cristo

directed the young woman's attention to the sofa on which Morrel was lying. She advanced towards him with clasped hands and a smile upon her lips.

"Valentine! Valentine!" cried Morrel, from the bottom of his soul; but his lips uttered no sound. And as though all his strength were centred in that internal emotion, he sighed and closed his eyes. Valentine rushed towards him; his lips again moved.

"He is calling you," said the count,—"he to whom you have confided your destiny; he from whom death would have separated you. Happily I was there, and I vanquished death. Henceforth, Valentine, you must never again be separated on earth, since he has rushed into death to find you. Without me, you would both have died; I restore you to each other. May God place to my account these two lives that I have saved!"

Valentine seized the count's hand, and with an irresistible impulse of joy carried it to her lips.

"Oh, thank me again!" said the count. "Tell me till you are weary that I have restored you to happiness; you do not know how much I require this assurance."

"Oh, yes, yes, I thank you with all my heart!" said Valentine; "and if you doubt the sincerity of my gratitude, oh, then, ask Haydée! asked my beloved sister Haydée, who ever since our departure from France has caused me to wait patiently for this happy day, while talking to me of you."

"You, then, love Haydée?" asked Monte Cristo, with an emotion he in vain endeavoured to conceal.

"Oh, yes! with all my soul."

"Well, then! listen, Valentine," said the count; "I have a favour to ask of you."

"Of me! Oh, am I happy enough for that?"

"Yes; you have called Haydée your sister. Let her become so indeed, Valentine; render her all the gratitude you think you owe me. Protect her, for" (the count's voice was thick with emotion) "henceforth she will be alone in the world."

"Alone in the world!" repeated a voice behind the count, "and why?"

Monte Cristo turned round; Haydée was standing, pale, motionless, looking at the count with an expression of stupefied amazement.

"Because to-morrow, Haydée, you will be free; you will then assume your proper position in society,—for I will not allow my destiny to overshadow yours. Daughter of a prince! I restore to you the riches and name of your father."

Haydée became pale, and lifting her transparent hands to

heaven, exclaimed in a voice hoarse with tears, "Then you leave me, my lord?"

"Haydée, Haydée! you are young and beautiful; forget even my name, and be happy!"

"It is well," said Haydée; "your order shall be obeyed, my lord. I will forget even your name, and be happy." And she stepped back to retire.

"Oh, heavens!" exclaimed Valentine, who was supporting the head of Morrel on her shoulder, "do you not see how pale she is? Do you not see how she suffers?"

Haydée answered with a heart-rending expression, "Why should he understand this, my sister? He is my master, and I am his slave; he has the right to notice nothing."

The count shuddered at the tones of a voice which penetrated the inmost recesses of his heart; his eyes met those of the young girl, and he could not bear their brilliancy. "Oh, heavens!" he exclaimed, "can my suspicions be correct? Haydée, would it please you not to leave me?"

"I am young," gently replied Haydée; "I love the life you have made so sweet to me, and should regret to die."

"You mean, then, that if I leave you, Haydée—"

"I should die; yes, my lord."

"Do you then love me?"

"Oh, Valentine! he asks if I love him. Valentine, tell him whether you love Maximilian."

The count felt his heart dilate and throb; he opened his arms, and Haydée, uttering a cry, sprang into them. "Oh, yes!" she cried, "I love you! I love you as one loves a father, brother, husband! I love you as my life, for you are the best, the noblest of created beings!"

"Let it be, then, as you wish, sweet angel. God, who has sustained me in my struggle with my enemies, and has given me victory, will not let me end my triumph with this penance. I wished to punish myself, but God forgives me! Love me then, Haydée! Who knows? perhaps your love will make me forget all I wish not to remember."

"What do you mean, my lord?"

"I mean that one word from you has enlightened me more than twenty years of slow experience. I have now but you in the world, Haydée. Through you I again connect myself with life; through you I shall suffer, through you rejoice."

"Do you hear him, Valentine?" exclaimed Haydée; "he says that through me he will suffer,—through me, who would yield my life for him!"

The count meditated for a moment. "Have I discovered the truth?" he said; "but whether it be for recompense or punishment, I accept my fate. Come, Haydée, come!" and throwing his arm round the young girl's waist, he pressed the hand of Valentine, and disappeared.

During the next hour Valentine, agitated and voiceless, watched steadfastly over Morrel. At length she felt his heart beat, a faint breath played upon his lips, and a slight shudder, announcing the return of life, passed through the young man's frame. Then his eyes opened, but they were at first fixed and expressionless; then sight returned, and with it, feeling and grief. "Oh!" he cried in an accent of despair, "the count has deceived me; I am yet living;" and extending his hand towards the table, he seized a knife.

"Dearest!" exclaimed Valentine, with her adorable smile, "awake, and look towards me."

Morrel uttered a loud exclamation, and frantic, doubtful, dazzled, as though by a celestial vision, he fell upon his knees.

The next morning, at daybreak, Valentine and Morrel were walking arm in arm on the seashore, Valentine relating how Monte Cristo had appeared in her room; how he had unveiled everything; how he had revealed the crime; and finally, how he had saved her life by allowing her to seem dead.

They had found the door of the grotto opened, and went forth, the latest stars of night still gleaming in the azure of the morning sky. Morrel soon perceived a man standing amid the group of rocks who was awaiting a sign from them to advance; he pointed him out to Valentine.

"Ah! it is Jacopo," she said, "the captain of the yacht;" and she beckoned him towards them.

"Do you wish to speak to us?" asked Morrel.

"I have a letter to give you from the count."

"From the count?" murmured both.

"Yes; read it."

Morrel opened the letter and read:—

My dear Maximilian,—There is a felucca for you at anchor. Jacopo will conduct you to Leghorn, where M. Noirtier waits his granddaughter, whom he wishes to bless before you lead her to the altar. All that is in this grotto, my friend, my house in the Champs Elysées, and my château at Tréport, are the marriage gifts bestowed by Edmond Dantès upon the son of his old master, Morrel. Mademoiselle de Villefort will share them with you; for I entreat her to give to the poor the immense fortune reverting to her from her father, now a madman, and her brother, who died last September

with his mother. Tell the angel who will watch over your future destiny, Morrel, to pray sometimes for a man, who, like Satan, thought himself, for an instant, equal to God; but who now acknowledges with Christian humility that God alone possesses supreme power and infinite wisdom. Perhaps those prayers may soften the remorse he feels in his heart. As for you, Morrel, this is the secret of my conduct towards you. There is neither happiness nor misery in the world; there is only the comparison of one state with another, nothing more. He who has felt the deepest grief is best able to experience supreme happiness. We must have felt what it is to die, Morrel, that we may appreciate the enjoyments of life.

Live, then, and be happy, beloved children of my heart! and never forget that until the day when God will deign to reveal the future to man, all human wisdom is contained in these two words, *Wait* and *hope*. Your friend,—Edmond Dantès, Count of Monte Cristo.

During the perusal of this letter, which informed Valentine for the first time of the madness of her father and the death of her brother, she became pale, a heavy sigh escaped from her bosom, and tears, not the less painful because they were silent, ran down her cheeks; her happiness cost her very dear.

Morrel looked round uneasily. "But," he said, "the count's generosity is too overwhelming; Valentine will be satisfied with my humble fortune. Where is the count, friend? Lead me to him."

Jacopo pointed towards the horizon.

"What do you mean?" asked Valentine. "Where is the count? Where is Haydée?"

"Look!" said Jacopo.

The eyes of both were fixed upon the spot indicated by the sailor; and on the blue line separating the sky from the Mediterranean Sea, they perceived a large white sail.

"Gone!" said Morrel; "gone! Adieu, my friend! adieu, my father!"

"Gone!" murmured Valentine. "Adieu, my friend! adieu, my sister!"

"Who can say whether we shall ever see them again?" said Morrel, with tearful eyes.

"My friend," replied Valentine, "has not the count just told us that all human wisdom was contained in these two words, *Wait* and *hope*?"

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